More or Less Equal

How Digital Platforms Can Help Advance Communication Rights

Editors   **Philip Lee / Dafne Sabanes Plou**

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INTRODUCTION

Philip Lee

A study presented at the Global Ethics Forum (GEF) 2012 and titled "Media Ethics: Social Media for Peace" was based on a survey of social media usage supported by two papers written from the perspective of the Pacific and Latin America regions. The survey and subsequent discussion at GEF 2012 identified a key question about the ethics of social media and, in particular, about what has come to be known as citizen journalism. As the study noted, "One emerging concern seeks to address the place and relevance of regulatory mechanisms in the context of civil society organizations and citizen journalists pursuing agendas that are significantly different from the mainstream media." As a result, the Workgroup in whose name the study was presented agreed to focus on the debate around standards, responsibility, and accountability for citizen journalists; to seek out and review existing codes of practice (if any); and to put forward elements of ethical journalism that could be shared by both professional (traditional) journalism and citizen journalism.

As a result, at the Global Ethics Forum (GEF) 2013, a presentation on "Media Ethics and Citizen Journalism" reviewed the context of the democratic public sphere in which citizen journalists claim to operate, the changing scene of new information and communication technologies, the shifting ground of professional journalism in the light of perceived challenges from the grassroots, and briefly touched on the concepts of "engaged dialogue" and "deep conversation" as models of effective communicative action. It articulated different understandings of citizen journalism and early attempts to identify the ethical principles on

which it might be based. In conclusion, it pointed to two documents – a policy brief on "The Right to Blog" published by ARTICLE 19 and the "Learning Resource Kit for Gender-Ethical Journalism and Media House Policy" published jointly by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) – as potential sources for a generic set of ethical principles for citizen journalism.

Such was the interest created that a third paper was commissioned focusing on gender equality as a key issue of the global human rights agenda and examining how digital platforms and citizen journalism can contribute to promoting women's rights and gender justice, and to strengthening a contemporary ethics of communication. Prepared for the Global Ethics Forum (2014) the paper argued for equality of access to information, communication and knowledge, and to digital platforms, user-generated content and citizen journalism as a means of achieving gender justice. Three case studies were included in the 2014 presentation: from Nepal "Nepali women using new information and communication technology, citizen journalism and social media to advocate for policy change"; from South Africa "GenderIT.org: Gender and ethics in an online environment"; and from Turkey "Flying Broom's "Local Women Reporters' Network" and "Gender-sensitive Reporting and Alternative Media Programme for Women".

The three GEF papers brought together here in one publication affirm Richard Keeble's observation that:

> *The emergence of internet-based media has highlighted the need to acknowledge the right of all (and not just members of the professionalised, privileged and largely white, male elite) to communicate in the main or alternative public spheres.*[1]

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[1] Keeble, Richard (2009). "The Basics of Journalism: Concepts of Ethics, Responsibility and Quality in media and journalism." Paper given at the Catholic University Eichstaett-Ingolstadt School of Journalism, September 18-20, 2009.

In today's information age, many public spheres co-exist in which institutions and people interact to a greater or lesser extent and which are no longer characterised by forms of "one-to-many" communication but of "many-to-many" communication. This is true at all levels: global, national, community, and personal, wherever digital technologies have enabled ever more complex interconnectivity. One-to-many used to mean top-down, an elite broadcasting or newscasting system whose gatekeepers were agenda-setters and opinion-makers. Today, one-to-many includes bloggers, a form of narrowcasting only constrained by the extent of its erudition, persuasiveness, outrageousness, or socio-cultural standing. Likewise, many-to-many includes coalitions and alliances such as Indymedia, which identifies itself as "a collective of independent media organizations and hundreds of journalists offering grassroots, non-corporate coverage ... a democratic media outlet for the creation of radical, accurate, and passionate tellings of truth." Inevitably, both one-to-many and many-to-many subsume an almost inevitable element of preaching to the ideologically converted.

In this context, the ground beneath the noble profession of journalism appears to have radically shifted under pressure from 21st century reinterpretations of democratic participation, the role and identity of "public spheres", and, of course, exponential developments in information and communication technologies. In earlier times, a journalist was a trained and paid professional working for an established organisation in mainstream media (print, radio, television). Today, a journalist (one who conveys information about day-to-day events) is anyone who mediates between a happening and an audience, whether via a formal outlet or an informal network. Crucially, the definition of journalist should include anyone who upholds freedom of expression and opinion

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http://www.ku-eichstaett.de/fileadmin/1303/Downloads/Keeble_Paper.pdf

with the aim of contributing to social change and the greater democratization of society. Yet:

> *Change will, in fact, only come if based on a radical political analysis of the media and society. This will incorporate an awareness of the possibilities of journalistic activities both within and outside the corporate media and as part of a broader political project to democratise the media and society in general. The strategy will also ultimately involve a radical broadening of the definition of journalism to include intellectuals, campaigners and citizens – all of them articulating their ideas within the dominant and alternative public spheres.*[2]

In the light of recent discoveries by the Planck observatory, which is a long way into its mission to survey microwave radiation in the cosmos, we can conceive of public communication as a universe comprised of constellations (public spheres) separated by visible and dark matter (information and knowledge sources) that exert varying degrees of gravitational pull (influence) on bodies that are either permanently in the neighbourhood or merely passing through. Each constellation (public sphere) contains clusters of bright and dark stars (information and knowledge sources) whose impact alters over time (becoming less or more penetrating, authoritative and credible). Enveloping the whole is background radiation from an earlier epoch when information and knowledge were supposedly uniform and God-given.

The communication paradigm of centres of gravitational attraction (influence), including visible and dark matter (political, social, and cultural restraints and constraints), provides a conceptual model for today's public spheres in which the journalist (anyone who mediates between an event and an audience) operates. Dominant public spheres (those exert-

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[2] Keeble (ibid.)

ing powerful influence, but emitting weak light) and alternative public spheres (those exerting weaker influence, but emitting strong light) co-exist and interact.

Clearly, dominant and alternative public spheres are not fixed entities. They change in density and occasionally in position according to political, social, and cultural ideologies and environments; they interact in complex ways; they are subject to rapid fluctuations in terms of the networks and people that make them up and the technologies that link or divide them. Traditionally, the dominant public sphere and its media have been responsible for political and social accountability; the media, in particular, often had a formal public service remit supposedly guaranteed by financial independence and government non-interference. Such "public service media" carried content that was informative or of cultural value, as opposed to the aim of commercial media, which was to provide content that attracted a large audience and maximized revenue from advertising and sponsorship. Of course, public service media also carry material with little informational or cultural value, and commercial media are often obliged to carry material which only appeals to minority audiences.

The distinction between public service and commercial media is not always clear. In the United Kingdom, Channel 4 is publicly owned but largely commercially self-funded, and it programmes a large amount of entertainment while being subject to a public service remit. Public service media facilitate the implementation of cultural policies aimed at uniting disparate parts of a country. For example, Canada is committed to bilingualism (English and French). As a result, its national public broadcaster, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) is publicly funded, employing translators and journalists who speak both official languages and it encourages the production of cross-cultural material. Interestingly, TV Ontario (TVO), one of its provincial counterparts, describes itself as "Ontario's public educational media organization and

a trusted source of interactive educational content that informs, inspires, and stimulates curiosity and thought." In the UK, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) also supports multiculturalism and diversity, broadcasting on radio and television in both Welsh and Scottish Gaelic.

The alternative public sphere and its media are markedly different. In an article published in the International Communication Gazette dedicated to provoking greater conceptual and analytical clarity around what is meant by "media development" in an increasingly multifaceted communications world, Guy Berger makes the point that:

> *Citizen journalism and blogging challenge the status of institution-driven journalism, as well as the occupational ideology of professional journalists and journalism. At large, the internet decentralises the privileged position of the media to interpose itself between source and user. It also alters the spatial horizon of community- or nationally based media.*[3]

It is worth considering how traditional and alternative media interact and displace each other according to circumstance. How do their different constellations and clusters exert a gravitational pull on public awareness of key issues that have an impact on people's lives? How do they create informed public opinion that can be harnessed for political and social change?

Interestingly, in this same publication there are five articles on communication, gender and women's use of media (including the Internet) to freely review and publicize their reality in a world where roles and gender expectations are being transformed at a steadily increasing pace. Communication rights exercised by women allow them to enter a world that has long been considered private and which now , through the use

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[3] Berger, Guy (2010). "Problematizing 'media development' as a bandwagon gets rolling". In the International Communication Gazette, Vol 72, No 7, November 2010.

of new communication channels, is being exposed by their challenges to and questioning of injustice, violence and censorship. The claim for equal opportunity and gender justice is clear in women's new communication outputs, ranging from research and feature articles published online to lively campaigns in radio and social networks. In new media technologies women have found great tools to advance and strengthen their objective of achieving full citizenship and equality in today's society.

As Elisabeth Clemens has pointed out, providing what people need to know to govern their lives and to make informed decisions is crucial both in terms of democratic accountability and citizens' participation in a democracy. Doing so reinforces a:

> *Vision of rational individuals governing themselves through collective deliberation. By means of critical discourse, self-interested or private individuals reflect on common concerns and discover the nature of the public good, justice, and truth.*[4]

There is a strong echo here of the claim made for communication rights as fundamental to any functioning democracy. Communication rights facilitate and guarantee:

- *Good leadership* because equitable access to the technologies of communication enables informed and knowledgeable participation.
- *Good citizenship* because active participation in the political, economic, social and cultural life of a community can benefit everyone.
- *Good government* because those in power can interact meaningfully with those who placed them there.

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[4] Clemens, Elisabeth C. (2010). 'Democratization and Discourse: The Public Sphere and Comparative Historical Research.' In Social Science History 34(3): 373-381.

- *Sustainable development* because people are in the know about what impacts – for good or bad – their lives and livelihoods.

As the United Nation's Special Rapporteur on Communication and Human Rights underlined to participants at the 2009 conference of the International Association for Media and Communication Research (Mexico City):

> *Nowadays, communications must be regarded as a fundamental tool for participation in local, national and international development plans. Such plans must take into account its economic dimensions because communication is strongly related to the access to electronic media, its social dimensions because of the means it provides to building citizenship, and its political dimensions because it involves the participation of all... Summing up, access to communication is part of the right to development. Therefore, we must stress the fact that sectors that have historically been marginalised must have effective access to communication and information. From the perspective of pluralism and a culture of peace, we must favour universal access to such rights.*[5]

This publication argues that equality, accessibility, and diversity are watchwords in building and maintaining societies and communities based on principles of justice, sustainability and peace.

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[5] "Communication and Human Rights" by Frank La Rue Lewy. In Communication and Human Rights ed. by Aimee Vega Montiel. IAMCR, 2012.
http://www.iamcr.org/resources/latest-news/1094-chr

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MEDIA ETHICS:
SOCIAL MEDIA FOR PEACE

Lilian Ndangam and Philip Lee

Prefatory Note: *This paper was prepared for the Global Ethics Forum 2011-2012 by Lilian Ndangam and Philip Lee.*

> *The broader question, then, is: to study how and under what constraints, and with what assistance (or otherwise) from new media resources, are people now constructing a sense of connection to wider public spaces, spaces of potential politics and citizenship – or not? Do new media, any more than old, improve our chances of constructing a public space in which we can address each other as effective equals?* [1]

Each new medium of communication changes society. From printing to broadcasting to digital technologies, mass media have had successively greater impact on people's lives, their ways of thinking and of viewing the world. As a consequence, throughout history what became known as the mass media have often been constrained by government, corporate, and religious interests – raising crucial questions of ownership, control, and censorship. Such constraints inevitably led to the

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[1] Nick Couldry (2002). "The Forgotten Digital Divide: Researching Social Exclusion/Inclusion in the Age of Personalised Media." Paper presented to the Media in Transition: Globalisation and Convergence conference, MIT, 10-12 May 2002.

creation of alternative media – more accessible, less restrictive spaces in which citizens can express their own opinions and agendas. Today's communication scene is no different. Once again, the new media of communication are providing alternatives that have the potential to empower ordinary people – but on a scale and at a speed and with a connectivity unimaginable in the past.

Digital technologies and social networks facilitated by access both to the Internet, to mobile telephony and to satellite networks have enabled many people around the world to establish virtual networks and online communities. Social media are a key dimension of the way computers and digital technologies are revolutionizing how people create, store, transmit and consume information and knowledge. Such a transformation raises profound questions about the way we communicate, about human identity and continuity:

> *In the digital culture that is being established in front of our eyes, a new form of reading is emerging: gleaning, clicking, zapping, skimming; it is both visual and tabular and does not involve a meditative attitude; rather it focuses on finding answers to questions and rapidly renewing objects on the screen. Above all, by making it possible to combine writing, image, sound, and video, the new computer technologies are undermining the dominant position of language, stripping it of the aura with which it has been invested since ancient times when it was used to magically address the world, to express a relationship to reality, and to hold the tribe under its charm.[2]*

Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein have identified six different types of social media: collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia), blogs and microblogs (e.g. Twitter), content communities (e.g. Youtube),

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[2] From Papyrus to Hypertext: Toward the Universal Digital Library, by Christian Vandendorpe. University of Illinos Press (2009), pp. 165-6.

social networking sites (e.g. Facebook), virtual game worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft), and virtual social worlds (e.g. Second Life).[3]

These new media and social networks have important implications for society, culture, and politics. Besides offering alternative ways of consuming news, information and entertainment, social media sites offer opportunities for establishing and building virtual networks both within countries and across national borders. David Faris points to three distinguishing factors that make emerging social media unique: their ability to share and spread information through an individual's trust-based social networks, the flexibility offered by multiple options for accessing (i.e. by mobile telephony or through computers, laptops and tablets), and their accessibility and functionality for many people with basic computer literacy skills.[4]

Reliance on trust-based social networks underscores the extent to which social media are rooted in and sustained by a physical community and the existing relationships within this. The distinguishing characteristics identified by Faris partially account for the popularity of social networking sites and content-sharing communities online. In a survey of 156 members of the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) located globally, 62% of the respondents indicated using social media sites between four and seven days a week. The survey also revealed heavy reliance on social networking sites and online content, and much less on virtual game and virtual social worlds (e.g. Second Life).

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[3] Kaplan, Andreas M.; Michael Haenlein (2010). "Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media." Business Horizons 53 (1): 59–68.

[4] David Faris. "We Are All Revolutionaries Now: Social Media Networks and the Egyptian Revolution. Social Media Revolutions: All Hype or New Reality?" Liechtenstein Institute for Self-Determination, Princeton University, 2011: 14, http://www.princeton.edu/lisd/publications/socialmedia_2011.pdf

The high levels of interaction offered by social media have also provided extensive resources and opportunities for social entrepreneurs and activists, which in the past were less easily accessible or non-existent. The networked capacity of social media has been significant in empowering both individuals and communities, and in driving collective action – as was evident in the Arab Spring of 2011. Such examples prompt further reflection on the role of social media in promoting social transformation and a culture of peace. Survey respondents broadly acknowledged the potential for social media to facilitate dialogue, to promote the ready exchange of information and ideas, and to mobilize collective action. They also highlighted innovative applications of social media to promote peace and social justice in their country:

- *Social media have embraced peace awareness campaigns which have impacted greatly in reconciling Kenyans after the post-election violence in 2007/08.*
- *In Taiwan, social media has been effective in rallying help for relief efforts after Typhoon Morakot. So, I would think that promotion of peace via social media is also possible.*
- *Beyond promoting peace in Peru social networks are very active in defending social, environmental and political rights, freedom of expression and the press, and to denounce abuses.*
- *It can allow access to information not included in corporate media. I use it to share peace journalism media I create.*

However, several respondents emphasized the need to combine the use of social media with other traditional means of engagement:

Social media are very important in Brazil, especially because this is a powerful space to share information about ONGs, protests, social movements that traditional media do not show or support. Despite this I am not sure about its real poten-

tial. I realize that this space is very important as a new possi-bility to broadcast information and strengthening the networks in the continental country. But considering that the links in so-cial media are due to personal and individual interests, the in-formation probably does not reach groups without interest in social and political issues. So, I think there is potential to con-nect people and strengthen causes, but it is only one more way to do so, not the only one.

In the case of the Arab Spring, social media and mobile commu-nications played a significant role in transforming virtual ideas into public action. The images of Mohamed Bouazizi – the street vendor whose self-immolation sparked the riots – quickly spread online through networks of family and friends. Western mass media were also quick to pick up stories and images spread via digital technolo-gies to bolster and/or illustrate their own reporting. However, a note of caution as to the unconfirmed veracity of the information was nearly always introduced, which raises ethical questions of authenticity, relia-bility, and journalistic objectivity. Many commentators point to the fact that social media do not operate in a vacuum, that many authoritarian regimes display an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the in-ternet and digital technologies, and that many so-called revolutions (not least those in the Middle East) were the product of years of patient activism.

In an insightful article published online in the *Al Jadid Review*, Mi-chael Teague contended that:

The honeymoon period during which geriatric and calcified re-gimes were dumbfounded by a new, modern threat is certainly finished, and the counterrevolution is well underway. The in-ternet has been instrumental in nourishing the connective tis-sues that bond activists and the citizenry in general, and has even had more immediate, practical applications. Indeed, in a

short span of time, online communications have helped Ar-
abs to redeem the multiple failures of the heady pan-Arab
and Arab nationalist dreams of the 50's and 60's. If the
movements that are unfolding today at such an unpredictable
pace are to be successful, however, much more sacrifice still
needs to be made. That means, first and foremost, the sacri-
fice of unreasonable illusions about what is possible and what is
not.[5]

In the Pacific, and in the specific content of debates around gen-
der equality, questions have been raised about the efficacy of new
information and communication technologies at the grassroots level.
Local research has reiterated the effectiveness of traditional media
(face-to-face communication and local initiatives) and questioned their
apparent displacement by new media. Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls (see
Chapter 2) identifies one particular aspect of the digital divide:
that rural women have least access to digital platforms partly due to low
levels of technological literacy, partly due to the high costs of new
technologies, but also due to a lack of infrastructure such as electricity
and networks. According to her:

The challenge for feminist media networks, like femLINKpacific
is not only to ensure that women we work with are reflected
in a range of media content particularly as decision- makers
able to claim and define their peace, human rights and hu-
man security. We also need to ensure that social media content
particularly civil society campaigns ensure equitable space for
women as well – in all our diversities.

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[5] "New Media and the Arab Spring", by Michael Teague (2012).
http://www.aljadid.com/content/new-media-and-arab-spring

Latin American society, with 43% of its population already connected to the Internet in South America and 27.5% in Central America and with extensive use of cell phones, recognizes that connectivity and participation in cyberspace are important dimensions of life today and in the future. For young people, the socialization and meaning given to the web are intrinsic to the construction of their identity. For many adults, presence and active participation in cyberspace underlies their work identity and also their social identity. Such is today's convergence of digital technologies in the home and workplace that Latin Americans seem to see little point in separating the two and no point at all in legislating for two different "worlds". Commentators observe that what is wrong in one is equally wrong in the other and everyone should be expected to be law abiding. The particular example of gender discrimination is given, in which virtual gender violence should be seen by the authorities to have equal weight with actual gender violence in real life.

However, Dafne Sabanes Plou (see Chapter 3) is of the opinion that there is still a long way to go before any kind of parity in accessibility and affordability is achieved. She observes that:

> *The information society is in full swing and is extended day by day in the region. It will be important for governments to carry out their plans for universal access for their people, also in broadband, and educational plans that will allow participation in the web to be an option for everyone, at affordable prices and with stable networks and rules of participation that respect freedom of expression, of association and active participation in the development of Internet content.*

New media and new media tools have created spaces for more people than at any time previously in history to become engaged with the important issues of our time. They have made a significant and enduring difference to the way people organize for social and political

activism, created economic opportunities for those in the develop-
ing and developed world, facilitated disaster response, linked net-
works across national divides, and shared previously inaccessible
information and knowledge – such as alternative ways of under-
standing issues of conflict. Social media tools in particular have
allowed people to be producers of content and to participate in dia-
logue that spans the globe in real time. As a recent report comments:

> *With new media, the individuals who use them can drive the*
> *tools' influence. These new tools can be used to propagate*
> *conflict or peace. Those using new media also need to con-*
> *sider the consequences of their activities and their own respon-*
> *sibility to be honest, fair, and accurate; to check their facts;*
> *not to distort information; to question the motives of their*
> *sources; and to avoid creating stereotypes. Critical thinking*
> *now, especially by the digital natives, about how to harness*
> *the power and potential of new media to manage conflict and*
> *build peace is one essential step in making sure that society does*
> *not miss this opportunity to contribute to peace.*[6]

The onus appears to be less on regulatory mechanisms (codes
of practice, media observatories, ombudspersons, etc.) than on civil
society seizing the opportunity to make use of digital technologies and
social media to construct a better world. However, what might be seen
as an ethical imperative to bring about inclusive communication – espe-
cially in regard to peace-building – is easier said than done. This
right to communicate is by no means universally acknowledged, let
alone formally recognized in the legislative frameworks of individual
countries. And with regard to digital technologies, as Katherine

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[6] The Impact of New Media on Peacebuilding. Study Guide published by the
Endowment of the United States Institute of Peace (2011).

Reilly notes, Latin American governments are fighting shy of regulatory reform:

> *Media reforms in the region studiously avoid regulating the Internet as a form of mediation. Blogging, tweeting and social media are exempt from consideration under the new media laws being passed throughout the region – which is not unexpected given the challenges and implications of monitoring social media. But the commercial aspects of internet, including issues related to intellectual property rights, distributed or "peer" software production, cloud computing, and the like are also excluded from current discussions.[7]*

Even so, digital technology and social media offer increased potential for wider and more sustained public participation in democratic governance and in decision-making around the crucial questions of our times. One emerging concern seeks to address the place and relevance of regulatory mechanisms in the context of civil society organizations' and citizen journalism's pursuit of agendas that are significantly different from the mainstream media. In this respect, quite a number of organizations (such as the Poynter Institute and the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism) are beginning to look for common ground and shared codes of practice.

The democratic potential of equal access to communication (especially via today's digital technologies) was also endorsed by a group of communicators meeting in Busan, Korea, to prepare a statement on communication in time for the World Council of Churches' 10th Assembly in 2013. The Busan Communication Statement "Reclaiming communication for life, justice and peace" notes that:

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[7] "Is media reform enough in Latin America's post-liberal economies?" by Katherine Reilly. In Media Development 3/2012.

> *Communication can sow understanding or misunderstanding, harmony or discord. Those who challenge injustice use communication to empower. Those who deny justice use communication to disempower. Communicators for peace seek to create images and tell stories that respect the values and traditions that lie at the heart of other people's lives. Such images and stories can strengthen inter-cultural and inter-religious understanding, challenge stereotypes, and promote societies that are able to live together in peace, affirming what they hold in common as well as what separates them.*

Many people believe that social media have an important role to play in peace-building. No one believes that social media alone can do the job. They can set an issue in the agenda, but no more than that. Peace must be built on action basis, not the Internet. However, there is general consensus that social media constitute a valid field of dialogue, exchanging thoughts, exchanging opinions and promoting ideas and can contribute to re-affirming shared values of tolerance, peaceful coexistence, and equal opportunities for all.

In this respect, social media provide the platform for voices from different corners to be heard and be an important space for sharing information about non-governmental organizations, protests, and social movements that traditional media do not cover or support. They facilitate exchange of information, sharing of views, and are a quick way to distribute information and an interactive way of developing ideas and plans, especially as an organizing tool for grassroots movements of excluded social groups.

As a form of "citizen-based conversation", social media are easily adapted to defending social, environmental and political rights, freedom of expression and the press, and to denouncing abuses. They become tools for people's mobilization and demonstration (both virtually and on the streets) and are especially effective for relief efforts.

While such claims may be generally valid, they remain to be substantiated by empirical research, especially when it comes to building and sustaining peace. Social media may well play an important intermediary role, but we should not lose sight of Martin Luther King's insight that:

> *One day we must come to see that peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek, but that it is a means by which we arrive at that goal. We must pursue peaceful ends through peaceful means.*

1.1 Ethical Challenges

Regardless of the potential and opportunities posed by the new media for social transformation and peace, issues of trust and privacy (the potential for sharing personal information for commercial purposes) remain a lingering concern to many civil society organizations as they engage with social media. Respondents to the WACC survey mentioned above highlight a few of these ethical challenges:

> *Lack of verification and attribution of information, taking photos or quotes out of context, posting graphic content. How much information is too much? What self-disclosure should be encouraged/discouraged, especially for minors? How can socially responsible or redemptive content get higher ratings and/or more promotion than videos with irresponsible or detrimental content--and how do you democratize the rating process and promote values such as tolerance rather than sensationalism?*

> *Facebook is being actively used to monitor people that police and intelligence authorities believe are involved in criminal and political activities. Individual users can also violate the*

privacy of others by revealing their activities without their consent.

There is not much discussion of the theme at the level of public opinion, but groups specializing in communication rights have pointed to problems of security and privacy, and also to data retention for commercial purposes, which can be a serious problem for maintaining confidentiality in communications and could lead to the violation of fundamental communication rights. But people in general don't have much information on the theme. In this sense, the media ought to take a more critical attitude and open up the debate.

In addition to concerns about the authenticity of information circulated on social media and the potential misuse of personal information, censorship is an important concern on social media sites. As Philip Howard and Muzzamil Hussain point out, the use of pseudonyms on social media by opposition parties facing harassment in authoritarian countries violates user agreements created by social media sites such as Facebook[8]. Civil society activists and citizen journalists operating in authoritarian regimes face similar problems using pseudonyms on social media sites. Some social media sites also face pressure from some governments to censor information and limit access to their sites and other information on the Internet[9]. In response to such pressures and concerns from users, the Global Network Initiative was set up to provide a framework for ICT companies and other stakeholders. The initiative provides a framework aimed at protecting and advancing freedom of expression and privacy globally.

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[8] Philip Howard and Muzzamil Hussain (2011) "The Upheavals in Egypt and Tunisia: The Role of Digital Media." Journal of Democracy 22 (3) : 35 -48.

[9] In January 2012, Twitter refined its technology to censor messages on a country-by-country basis and announced plans the share removal requests it receives from governments, companies and individuals.

Concerns about censorship, privacy and social responsibility regarding access to and use of social media point to a need to interrogate its potential further. Some of the questions to be addressed might include:

- What roles could social media realistically and credibly play in strengthening democratic accountability, good governance and good citizenship?
- What roles could social media realistically and credibly play in conflict-resolution and/or peace-building?
- How can social media be a credible and reliable source of information and opinion in the context of the practice of global and national journalism?
- What steps need to be taken to guarantee a sound working relationship between so-called professional journalists and citizen journalists that respect commonly accepted deontological codes of practice?
- To what uses can those working on peace-building and conflict-resolution put social media to enhance and promote their cause in ways that achieve sustainable peace?
- If social media become the norm for day-to-day communication, to a large extent replacing mainstream media, what consequences can be predicted?

2

WOMEN'S ACCESS TO SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS IN RURAL FIJI

Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls

While millions of people around the globe, through social net-working (internal, external, or mobile), are building online local, regional, and global communities to communicate their shared interests and activities, disseminate information, and interact through a variety of web-based tools, what are the implications for rural women in the Pacific Island region?

Only three out of the 20 rural women leaders I met with in a rural centre of Fiji, 30 minutes by road from the capital city, have regular access to the internet. At femLINKpacific's community media centre in Suva, young women from our Generation Next project have regular access to the internet through their work (one of the reasons we have a Facebook page) but for most of the women and young women we work with in four rural centres in Fiji, Internet access is only possible from local cafes, which may or may not be a safe distance from their home. For many who live outside of the electricity grid, often this means 25 kilometres of travel from their home. Mobile phone technology, however, makes it possible for rural women to receive information from a central location. The challenge remains being able to afford credit to be able to reply or pass the message on.

It is clear that despite the use of the term "global village" in relation to the Internet, Pacific realities, especially Pacific women's

realities when addressing information and communication, have re-
mained marginalized for too long. According to the Regional review of
PICT[1] progress on the Beijing Platform for Action – October 2009-
January 2010:

> *The explosion in ICT in every PICT, and the global connections*
> *it permits, are opening up new opportunities for some Pacific*
> *women and girls. However, only a small minority of Pacific*
> *women have access to ICT and to global markets, although some*
> *women are starting to use ICT to explore educational, econom-*
> *ic and development opportunities. For example, Samoa's*
> *Women in Business Development Inc. markets fine mats,*
> *handicrafts and virgin coconut oil products globally through*
> *website sales and orders. Other examples include Samoa's*
> *Fesootai network of community-based tele-centres (11 of which*
> *are managed and operated by women's committees); Niue's*
> *Learning Centres, which introduce women to ICT and the vari-*
> *ous functions they might use; the Pacific Graduate Women's*
> *Net (PGWnet); and the Small Islands Communities online*
> *discussions (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cul-*
> *tural Organization – UNESCO). Women in the public service*
> *also connect via the Pacific Village Online project, which*
> *links all the public services in the region with a database of na-*
> *tional codes of conduct. The Pacific Rural Internet Connectivity*
> *System (PacRICS) recently extended its free Internet connection*
> *at 40 public good sites for another 12 months. This free service*
> *includes the upgrade of modems and transmitters.*

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[1] PICT: Pacific Island Countries and Territories include; Australia, Common-
wealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Cook Islands, Fiji, Federated States of
Micronesia, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New
Zealand, Niue, Pitcairn, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Is-
lands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Wallis &
Futuna.

However, obstacles encountered (according to the report) include policy and ethical issues, in particular the   general lack of gender policies and guidelines within the media sector:

- There is an absence of national and regional mechanisms for standard-setting in media and communications (electronic, print, visual and audio). This gap contributes to the continuing portrayal of negative and degrading stereotypes of women in the media. There is also untrammelled entry of international programmes, many of which present stereotypical and negative pictures of women's experiences, and foreign advertisements promoting consumerism.
- Overall there is a serious lack of gender policies being adopted and applied within media and ICT initiatives both at national and regional levels. For example, the regional PacRICS project implementation plan has no gender-related indicators.
- Access to ICT is not evenly spread. There is a danger that rural women especially are becoming further marginalized in the new "digital divide" due partly to affordability but also to the lack of infrastructure to provide services to rural areas. Similarly, projects to provide computers in schools favour those living in urban areas.
- Women's electronic networks have an immense potential for change. Among possible models for others to emulate are the Women Peace and Human Security network, which has succeeded in gaining a place for women's groups and civil society groups in FRSC Track II discussions, and the FWCC anti-domestic violence network, which has built up a strong and informed cadre of female and male advocates in most PICTs.

From 2004 to 2007, femLINKpacific participated in the People's Communication for Development (PC4D) research which helped vali-

date that there is almost nothing about women in relation to technology, especially in the context of the Pacific, where in recent years there has been a development of the Pacific Digital Strategy. What this also means is that decisions are being made about the ICT sector, but without substantive gender analysis. What was of particular concern was that those working in the research field do not seem to be interested, or are not working with grassroots women, and are not connecting it with communication, or with technology.

Underlying these issues is the need to give due consideration to infrastructure issues when planning developments relating to new information and communication technologies (ICTs), ensuring that communities are able to contribute to local content development and production.

The review of related literature indeed revealed that Pacific women or even the gendered aspects of ICTs are not being included in current research on communications particularly those dealing with ICTs.

Whatever research on new ICTs was available tended to be limited to the kinds of jobs that are being generated by technology. They focused on how many computers there are per capita or how many people use the Internet. However, nothing is heard about communities or non-governmental organizations or grassroots people's organizations and their use of technology. These were also silent on television and newspapers or the other modes of communicating as though everything else has stopped.

So, while the global point of view highlights that new ICTs seem to be the priority area, PC4D fleshed out the applicability of these new ICTs to grassroots women. This is critical because so much emphasis in our region has been given to debating internet connectivity and the establishment of computer access points.

Too often these strategies fail to ask the question: "Do these communities want these new ICTs? Do they want to use the computer or the internet? What is effective on the ground?" The Pacific perspective of the research has reiterated the effectiveness of what is often called traditional tools and yet people only talk about new ICTs today.

In this respect the research helped draw together what community and women's media advocates have been saying for a long time, that ICT development should not just be focused on the technology-determined kind of development but that ICT needs to be more people-centred. For as people, we are all still communicating the way people have been communicating, years, decades, centuries ago – that is talking directly to each other through radio, theatre, street plays, conversations and that is what works!

2.1 Pacific Women's Choice of Communications

As the research process began, we found it critical not to classify communication tools as "new" and "old" technologies, but to view them broadly. Hence we took into account traditional means of communication such as theatre and face-to-face discussion alongside newer tools such as radio and television, and even newer ICTs such as cellular phones and computers.

In general, intermediary groups in Fiji viewed oral communication as most empowering for grassroots women. The key in empowering grassroots women was "to go and sit down with them." Print media was also cited, given its accessibility and suitability to Fiji's reading culture, along with radio due to its reach and popularity among women. Theatre and performing arts and film were also considered empowering while television and telecommunications were not.

Intermediary groups in Fiji believed that new ICTs, particularly the internet, could be potentially empowering for grassroots women. However, new ICTs are largely inaccessible given infrastructure problems. Using the cellular phone likewise poses limitations. At the moment, only intermediary groups find new ICTs empowering for their own use. As such, traditional communication tools are more empowering for grassroots women.

A similar finding was made in Papua New Guinea (PNG), where both intermediary groups and grassroots women are concerned with peace efforts in the country especially in Bougainville. Many feminist groups also viewed empowerment as deeply connected to peace-keeping, as PNG's women are also heavily affected by the violence inflicted on them and their families due to the conflict in Bougainville. Many groups, like Kup Women for Peace, also see the interconnections among HIV/AIDS, violence and wars. Intermediary groups and grassroots women are likewise concerned about violence against women as gang rapes brought about by *raskolism* are common and there are heavy cultural barriers against reporting these crimes to the authorities. In these situations, women's groups take on the role of mediator, counsellor and sometimes, legal aid and law enforcer.

2.2 Conclusion

The PC4D study verified that while the Internet and email, computers and mobile phones have much to offer, these were the least accessible to our ordinary women. Some of this "technology deprivation" may be explained by the absence of the necessary infrastructure such as electricity and networks (especially in rural areas), but also because of the low levels of technological literacy among the population, the

high costs of the new technology and the depths of poverty amongst our peoples.

The quest for information, as we are finding in our rural and regional media and policy networks, is critical but it must be in local languages in order to enable effective and interactive access by women. This requires us to consider a multi-media platform that includes inter-personal communication, with more "traditional modes" such as leveraging the power, efficiency and reach of radio to communicate, inform, educate and build networks across many groups of women. Women's participation is dependent on their access to information in the vernacular, and safe spaces to discuss their issues.

Social media therefore have a role in bringing Pacific women's realities to the global platform. FemLINKpacific's use of Facebook, for example is enabling us to share news and information such as Women's Weather Watch reports, Peace and Security campaigns and women's efforts to engage in constitutional revision and rebuilding democracy in Fiji. Podcasts are also enabling women to transform the media landscape.

Yes – the use of new media and social networks has important implications for society, culture, and politics, but in the context of women of the global south, specifically from rural and remote islands, it is not a question of ethics – unless it is ensuring equity in the allocation of communication resources. It is rather ensuring that they are simply not left behind.

The challenge for feminist media networks, like femLINKpacific is not only to ensure that t h e women we work with are reflected in a range of media content particularly as decision-makers w h o   a r e able to claim and define their peace, human rights and human security. We also need to ensure that social media content, particularly civil society campaigns, ensure equitable space for women as well – in all our diversities.

3

BUILDING NEW WAYS OF PARTICIPATING IN COMMUNICATION NETWORKS IN LAT-IN AMERICA

Dafne Sabanes Plou

Latin America awoke to the massive and intensive use of the Internet when the new century started. According to Internet Stats, Internet usage in the region during the last decade grew by 1,205%.[1] This phenomenon encompasses all ages, although the main users are young people under 30 years old. However, the middle-aged population accessing the Internet is growing in numbers, as many have the chance to learn about tools and platforms that allow proper use of the web both in the workplace and for social communication and entertainment. Of 400 million people in South American countries, 43% are Internet users, with a global average of 32%, while in Central America and Mexico, 155 million people use the Internet regularly, that is 27.5% of the population.

This extraordinary growth also brings a significant challenge. Spanish is ranked as the third most used language on the Internet[2], with just over 153 million people using the web in that language, while Portuguese ranks fifth (82 million users) thanks to extensive use by Brazilians. In 2006, the number of web sites in Spanish was 88 million and

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[1] http://www.internetworldstats.com
[2] http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm

45% were built in Spain. This means that 55% of the content is pro-
duced in other countries leaving it to Spanish-speaking Latin Americans
to disseminate the political, social, economic and cultural events in their
countries, as well as their thinking and written and audio-visual crea-
tions. In this sense, Latin Americans have not felt intimidated and have
certainly taken up the task. But, according to analysts, they still need to
increase and deepen the production of meaningful content, tools and
business models.

Latin Americans have not been shy in the use of social networks and
interactive media. This enthusiastic participation, growing mainly
among adolescents and young people under 20 years old, totalled 223
million at the end of 2011. According to Internet Stats, 25.8% of the
population of South America uses Facebook, while in Central America
and Mexico, the percentage is about the same, 24.7%. Almost all people
who are connected to the Internet in the latter group of countries have an
account with Facebook.

It is also interesting to follow the participation of Spanish-speaking
people in the blogosphere. Statistics in 2011 record 576,681 blogs and
the full profile of 204,312 bloggers in Spanish-speaking countries[3]. Of
these, 72% were male and 28% female, reflecting an interesting growth
in the participation of female bloggers over two years, since in 2009
they were only 19%. 82% of these bloggers are between 19 and 44 years
old, and the average age of the majority (38%) is between 24 and 34.
Most of them are from Argentina (10.1%), Mexico (8.6%), Chile (8%)
and Peru (5.1%).

But not everything is going so well in the Spanish-speaking blog-
osphere. Only 7.63% of these blogs are updated frequently and it can be
said that only 3.21% can be considered active. According to the topics
addressed, blogs about personal issues, 22% of the total in 2011, have

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[3] http://bitacoras.com/informe/11

been declining compared to previous years probably due to the booming use of social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, which focus largely on people's daily lives and their opinions. Those blogs that get good reading and interest from the public focus on news and media, especially on television and the Internet.

There are also Spanish-speaking bloggers' networks, and those with the largest number of participants are made by reporters and journalists and people who write about media and communications[4]. It is interesting that most traditional newspapers include blogs on their websites that are followed by readers. Moreover, in general, blogs are linked to Facebook and Twitter, so publication is immediately announced, attracting the attention of readers and increasing their impact.

Latin Americans are also very active Twitter users. Six countries in the region are among the 20 most active on this social network in the world. Chile ranks first among Latin American countries, probably due to the sustained use made by students during their street protests in 2011. It is followed by Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, Colombia and Mexico. In these countries it is not only show business celebrities who are users of Twitter, but also major political figures, as in Venezuela and Argentina, for example, where there is a continuous monitoring of their accounts by media. Tweets immediately occupy political space in traditional media, which now include social networks as a source of information.

Nor can we ignore the use of YouTube to share videos, documentaries and audiovisuals. In Mexico, Peru and Chile this platform ranks third in web traffic, while in Brazil, Argentina, Colombia and Venezuela it ranks fourth. There is already a local version of the service in Argentina and Mexico, with growing advertising power[5]. Company statistics

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[4] Redactores, Medios y Redes, 100 blogs first on the list,
http://bitacoras.com/informe/11
[5] http://llamanlaatencion.blogspot.com/2010/11/estadisticas-de-youtube-llego-

show that YouTube users in the region are on average between 18 and 54 years old, a broad spectrum of the population connected to the Internet. The videos are also played on Smartphones and links to cell phones from Facebook and Twitter allow four million people to share their audiovisual material on these platforms daily[6]. Spanish is the second most used language on YouTube, with 11% of videos circulating in that language.

Another important dimension of Latin American participation in the information society is marked by its collaboration with Wikipedia, the great universal collaborative encyclopaedia created in cyberspace. According to statistics published by Wikipedia, its version in Spanish gets about 31 million visitors to read or add 883 860 300 items per day[7]. To work in this language, Wikipedia has 225 active employees and 1,050 sporadic helpers. In 2008, among the 10 countries with most active editors and publishers were Argentina, Peru, Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela and Chile. Wikipedia in Portuguese ranks tenth among the different language and has 719,728 articles and 5,564 active users[8].

Against this background, we find that the Latin American population is not only accessing the Internet at a fast pace but is taking advantage of different tools and platforms, particularly social networks to interact, create content, share, produce information and comment about the reality of their countries with pictures, questions, opinions and knowledge. But does such online activity produce alternatives to the prevailing discourse in the region? Or is it nothing more than participation based on pure entertainment? Could one say that this contributes substantially to the building of the information society in the region? Does this mean that Latin America is bringing about the democratization of information

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los-mil.html

[6] http://www.tuexperto.com/2011/03/05/youtube-en-cifras-las-estadisticas-de-youtube-en-2011/

[7] https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Estad%C3%ADsticas

[8] https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia_en_portugu%C3%A9s

production and circulation? These are questions that do not always have clear answers, but it will be interesting to keep them on the table for discussion.

3.1 Real Life Also Takes Place in Cyberspace

We could say that we live between three screens: television, computer and cell phone. And this happens not only with teens but also with adults for whom these three screens are also part of their daily lives. Perhaps for adults, use is not so much based on entertainment or interacting with friends as happens with younger users, but tied to work, to instant information, to the events one cannot fail to know or comment about.

Latin American society has already assumed that access to and participation in cyberspace are significant aspects of their current and future life. For the young, as noted by specialist Roxana Morduchowicz, from Argentina, in her most recent book[9], there are sociocultural processes involved in the use, socialization and the significance of the web that determine to what extent the production of content on blogs and social networks is part of the construction of youth's identity. For many adults, presence and active participation in cyberspace construct their work identity and, depending on their environment and field, their social identity too.

Against this background, the efforts that a good portion of Latin American governments make to include the use of computers in schools are not bound to a lab but to achieving as their main goal the digital and social inclusion of a generation that probably cannot aspire to a decent job or significant personal development without access to or knowledge of computers, the Internet and social networking platforms.

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[9] Los adolescentes y las redes sociales. La construcción de la identidad en Internet., Fondo de Cultura Económica, Buenos Aires, 2012.

A significant percentage of the population in the region spends its life in two spaces: the virtual and the real, and the connection between them has become almost direct. People go in and out of these spaces without difficulty and relate to each other overcoming geographical distances. Real-time interaction through social networks is generated daily and attracts people from all social strata. Without a doubt, information technology and communication allow any user to learn the skills to create content and become producers of information in various formats. Podcasts that can be recorded with an ordinary cell phone have gone from being a typical journalist's blogging tool to a way of sharing family news, moments of fun among friends and also information that feeds the crowd sourcing sites of major newspapers and news agencies.

But these advances in the use of technology in the region coexist with uses of technology that need to be advanced in order to achieve true digital and social inclusion. In a study conducted in Chile by social researchers Alejandra Phillippi and Patricia Peña[10] with women in rural and marginal urban districts participating in the programme "I Love My Neighbourhood" aimed at public access to information technology and communication in neighbourhood telecentres, it was found that a high percentage of women were Facebook users (76%), in contrast to those who went online to access national media, such as electronic journals (20%) and television (12%). But these women still need to understand better the convergence of media on the Internet to get the resources provided by access to information, entertainment and communication for their personal growth. For a large part of the population, access in terms of connectivity does not always go hand in hand with use of the technol-

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[10] Mujeres y nuevas tecnologías en Chile: el impacto del acceso público a las TIC, presented by authors at the International Congress of FLACSO on "Gender equity policies prospectively, new scenarios and actors", Buenos Aires, September 2010, www.catunescomujer.org

ogy to achieve progress in understanding reality or to broaden the scope of its everyday world.

The Chilean example can be transported to any other country in the region, where users, especially those from popular sectors, start their Internet activity using Facebook, without having to go through the use of email as a first step. This friendly and colourful platform, in constant movement and easy to use, is easily adaptable to the possibilities of access to digital communications for this segment of the population. But how to preserve privacy and safety when using social media? This is one of the biggest dilemmas of the moment: the entrusting of personal information to the owners of the social networks. People do so unaware of the possible consequences.

Although schools and professional associations dedicated primarily to education, psychology and social communication issue alerts to families about the informed use of social networks that adolescents and young people should take into account, it is also true that adults often do little to safeguard their personal information. On the other hand, these platforms encourage people to let others know their location, details of their activities and their consumption in order to increase their own sales and advertising databases for commercial purposes. The ethical question on the commercial use of personal data remains a crucial point of discussion, with no solution yet in sight.

For now, we could say that there is a fine line between the commercial interests of the companies that offer their services for communication in cyberspace and the interests and rights of people who use them. Is it possible to make meaningful use of social networking from a non-profit perspective and to create ways on the Internet to publicize alternative visions of politics, society, economy and culture, among others?

3.2 New Roles for Community Radio Networks

As expected, community radio is no longer confined to messages via radio waves. Dozens of stations have taken up broadcasting via Internet and are making creative use of all the spaces and tools that digital communications provide. An interesting example is offered by one of the flagship community and citizens' radio stations in Argentina, Radio La Tribu, which "beats in the digital age" as it says on its web site.[11]

A glance at the home page of the site places us squarely at the convergence between traditional and digital media: the community radio station highlights its work with an issue blog; an online news agency; a section for podcasts to "download, multiply, make available, disassemble and upload" with a non-proprietary open content look and the ability to share information and knowledge; alternative communication materials for open use; audiovisual productions and outreach work built around festivals and a copyleft alternative culture.

The Latin American organization of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC AL) has at present a membership of 400 urban and rural radio stations in 18 countries in the region. Its activities include a range of services that are not only important to increasing the activity and communication constituency of its associates, but also marks important production of information and news from the grassroots and community reporters.

With instant news broadcasts in Spanish and Portuguese, on its site[12] the AMARC AL Pulsar Agency offers the ability to connect to the live stream of its associates and in this way provides the possibility to download mp3 audio format reports and notes on the hottest topics. All this is complemented by the top headlines of the day in Latin American newspapers and access to a database and other publications. Open infor-

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[11] http://www.fmlatribu.com/
[12] http://www.agenciapulsar.org/tapa.php

mation is a democratic reality implemented by AMARC AL radios. Even stations with fewer economic resources have up to date information and are able to include substantial materials in their broadcasts. AMARC AL's and Pulsar Agency's sites link to Facebook and Twitter, extending their work and information via social networks. The association also has a collaborative wiki for internal work.

But AMARC AL's role is strengthened by one of its programmes specifically focused on Legislation and the Right to Communicate. With an emphasis on broadcasting, the programme has positioned AMARC AL in its relation with governments and society as an active entity in the defence of the rights to freedom of expression and communication in the real and virtual worlds.

The programme's main task is to promote the democratization of information and communication policy and regulatory frameworks in the region, emphasizing the work of community radios. Through national and international lobbying, legal services and technical assistance, research and on-going monitoring, the programme promotes the strengthening of partner and national networks to defend and exercise their rights. It has also organized several missions to countries in the region to support work in favour of democratizing communication laws and to intervene when there is arbitrary or repressive action against the work of community radio.

Internet and social media networks, online news agencies and traditional media are all interconnected and drive new prospects for the development of information, communication and technology. They are the engine that increases the participation of social actors from all sectors, promoting respect for the diversity of ideas and creations and working for genuine democracy in the real and virtual environments in order to bring about social and digital inclusion.

3.3 Concrete Actions on the Internet to Strengthen Women's Rights

Between 2009 and 2011, organizations dedicated to digital communication in four Latin American countries participated in research on the theme of the Millennium Development Goals for Gender Equity. This research was coordinated by the Women's Rights Programme of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC PARM)[13] in Brazil. Colombia, Mexico and Argentina[14] were the countries chosen to monitor the situation of violence against women making use of information and communication technology and promote the strengthening of women's networks to eradicate this violence both in real and virtual lives.

In virtual spaces we see much of the behaviour, manifestations and trends found in real life. Unfortunately, violence against women is one of them. Research in these four Latin American countries showed similar results to those conducted in eight other countries in Africa and Asia. The main manifestations of violence against women using technology (both using computer and mobile phones) can be summarized as cyber bullying and surveillance; sexual harassment; theft; and distorted and aggressive use of images of women without their consent.

As a violent man encloses and limits his partner in real life, he also limits her digital communications, aims to monitor her relationships in the virtual world and to control every text message – when not using the phone as a tool to monitor her movements and actions. In regard to sexual harassment, many bullies hide behind anonymity or profiles with fancy names that can be used in chats and Internet forums to entrap their victims, disturb and assault them.

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[13] http://www.apc.org

[14] Reports of violence and use of information technology and communication in these countries can be found at www.genderit.org in the Violence against Women section.

Many women feel that this virtual sexual harassment is more threatening than the real one because not knowing personally who is harassing them makes them afraid of being intercepted by an aggressive stranger on the street and they feel they are not prepared to handle the situation. As for the theft and use of images, many women suffer retaliatory behaviour by their partners or former partners who circulate embarrassing pictures or sexual situations in order to harm their reputation and invade their privacy. The viral circulation of these images on the Internet and via SMS creates difficult situations to confront and stop. Women find it difficult to remove these pictures or videos once such defamatory material starts to circulate on the networks.

To eradicate gender violence in virtual spaces, PARM APC implemented a series of activities and actions in the four countries that included training workshops on the use of technology to end violence against women, the provision of small grants to perform local actions to raise awareness on the impact of gender violence on the Internet and the participation of women's organisations in the "Take Back the Tech" campaign that since 2006 contributes to the international *16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women*, which takes place from 25 November to 10 December. During the campaign women use virtual spaces and different technological tools to prevent and report such violence.[15]

In 2011 the campaign included putting together a virtual map in order to gather evidence to support women's complaints about these situations and make a case to police, legislators, prosecutors, governments and Internet service providers. Sometimes these situations are not taken seriously by the authorities in spite of the fact that women find it hazardous to their integrity and reputation. A free software platform was used to do this mapping and 192 cases of gender violence on the Internet

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[15] http://www.takebackthetech.net/

were mapped in more than a dozen countries, including the four Latin American countries mentioned.[16]

During the last decade several countries in the region have enacted new laws against gender violence, increasing sentences for offenders and creating prevention services, support and containment of survivors of such violence. However, none has considered virtual gender violence. Only the law passed in 2009 in Argentina includes the terms "symbolic violence" and "media violence", referring mainly to media messages that are based on "stereotyped patterns that transmit and reproduce domination, inequality and discrimination in social relations, naturalizing the subordination of women in society as well as those messages, by written word, audio or images, that promote the exploitation of women or their images, insult, defame, discriminate, dishonour, humiliate or threaten the dignity of women."[17]

In the opinion of specialists in computer law, there is no need for a specific law to punish offences that occur in virtual space. They consider that it is sufficient to implement existing legislation governing the real world. As noted earlier, people move quite easily from activities in virtual space to those in the real world, so there should not be a different assessment of the commission of crimes in cyberspace. Every adult should be able to respond to the requirements of the law, but also authorities should be ready to give virtual gender violence the same negative value as in real life. It is an issue about which there remains much to do in Latin America.

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[16] https://takebackthetech.net/mapit
[17] Law 26485, Full Protection of Women

3.4 Collaborative Web: Wikipedia and the Participation of Latin American Women

There are still few women involved as editors or publishers of Wikipedia articles. They number only 19% of the total number of editors and just 13% of biographies in the encyclopaedia belong to women. But there are efforts to change this situation towards greater gender equity and it is expected that by 2015 women publishers will reach at least 25% of the total.

Journalist Pepe Flores recounts in an article that this lack of women and the gender gap in Wikipedia is one of the most studied problems in the sociology of knowledge.[18] In the case of Wikipedia, "the problem of gender is not only reflected in the number of items, but in their emphasis and depth." It is not then a matter of meeting quotas, but of ensuring that publishers and editors contribute equally to the contents and take into account a gender perspective.

To address this concern, the Wikipedia Foundation created the *WikiContest on Iberoamerican Women* to promote the creation and editing of articles about prominent women in the region to be included in the online encyclopaedia. The competition results were announced on March 8, 2012, International Women's Day. What is interesting is that both women and men participated in this contest and published materials that highlight the life and contribution of dozens of Latin American women in diverse fields: sports, art, culture, science, technology, music, politics, economics, social struggles, etc. According to the jury, these were high-level contributions and a total of 504 articles in Wikipedia were published in Spanish.[19]

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[18] http://alt1040.com/2012/04/genero-wikipedia
[19] http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/las12/13-7148-2012-03-23.html

But the effort did not stop there. Active women dedicated to the development of free software and open content decided to meet in a WikiWomencamp[20] that took place in Argentina in May 2012. A conference on Wikigender was also included to discuss the best ways to contribute to the encyclopaedia from women's perspectives. There are branches of WikiWomen in Argentina, Chile and Venezuela and new groups have started up in Bolivia, Colombia and Brazil.

3.5 Conclusions and Recommendations

The use of electronic media and social networks in Latin America is very diverse and still a novelty. Some worldwide studies show that there is a saturation point in the use of social networking, because users run out of time. In this region the number of members of these networks grows at a daily rate and includes all sectors of society and all ages. People now have access to a lot of information from different viewpoints and political positions, as well as opportunities for participation that enable them to develop new interests and skills. To create content from everyday experience, and to explore, discover, recreate and share knowledge, are common.

The information society is in full swing and is being reinforced every day in the region. It will be important for governments to meet the need for universal access plans that include everyone, even access to broadband, and to develop educational plans that allow broad participation in the Internet that is affordable and allows networking, respect for freedom of expression, association and active participation in the development of Internet content.

Social organizations and citizens have the important role of strengthening community and non-commercial uses of the Internet. While pro-

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[20] http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/WikiWomenCamp

prietary social networking ranks first in interest and activities, it is possible to say that social organizations use them as a complement to their own communication system. Aware of the need to protect their data and privacy, as well as not finding them reliable, they use social networks in a limited way to publicize and give visibility to their causes and actions. This appropriation of information technologies and communication aims to go beyond a simple click on "I like it".

As noted by Adilson Cabral and Eula Dantas Taveira[21], the social appropriation of these technologies supersedes the view of private ownership of knowledge for one's own benefit and in order to take advantage and differentiate oneself from the rest. This means taking ownership and being aware of the worth of the collective production of meaning and knowledge. It also affirms that the relationship of people with technology also has a democratizing value.

Theories concerning popular communication in the 1970s and 80s and those that developed the concepts of community communication in the 90s gave support to the communication practices of social movements in the late 20th century. Similarly, today the ability to articulate and work in networks with open content, non-proprietary technologies, multi-media and the collective production of information and knowledge sustains a new exercise of citizenship that expresses itself both in the virtual and real worlds.

No need to repeat the success of many large rallies and street protests whose protagonists are contemporary social movements that find support for their success in social networks, tweets and instant messaging on cell phones. All of them favour spontaneous organization and exchange of slogans, with action on the ground, that are instantly shared from the perspective of the people themselves without waiting for cor-

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[21] Digital Inclusão for a social Inclusão : Perspectives and paradoxes, Adilson Cabral Filho and Eula Dantas Taveira Cabral, MAGAZINE DEBATES, Porto Alegre, v.4, n.1, p. 11-28, Jan. -jun. 2010.

porate media news or being afraid of media controlled by authoritarian governments. It is no longer possible to conceal or misrepresent the reality of events that numerous cameras and microphones transmit in democratic crowd sourcing.

Increasingly, society values communication rights as a human right that in turn contributes to the realization of other fundamental human rights. As Cabral and Taveira say in their article, "the complexity of the communication process in contemporary society requires access to all available media as social dialogue occurs at various levels" and there are chances that the formulation of public policies could emanate from civil society itself. To learn to take advantage of the resources that circulate in cyberspace and to create content for the real and virtual worlds collectively and openly, aiming for community ownership, opens the way to the construction of new public goods to advance in knowledge and the production of meaning with a social function.

Given the above, we note that cyberspace is also an arena where policies come into play, not only communication policies but policies designed from the perspective of an ideology of unilateral dominance, control and power. In Latin America there have not yet been attacks against the free circulation of content in cyberspace and people's activity on the Internet, though some governments are starting to do so. These attacks have generated much discussion in several northern countries considered to be democratic and in countries with repressive governments where restrictive measures already prevail that try to manage their citizens' real and virtual lives.

For the organizations and social movements and for a citizenship unwilling to be swayed by facile communications full of slogans and commercial images, alternative communication in cyberspace is a tool for generating ideas, opinion and debate, for questioning reality and thinking of transformations that lead to new ways of processing reality and growing community.

The ethical choice is clear, as it was in previous decades, when there were those who spoke of communication for solidarity and to create community. Technology can be a mechanism of domination if it does not serve people's interests[22]. The Declaration of Civil Society released in 2003 in the framework of the World Summit on the Information Society, sets out its aims clearly in its title: "Shaping Information Societies for Human Needs"[23]. This is essential to continue striving for communications as a fundamental social process, a basic human need and the foundation of all social organizations that aim to be participatory and committed to democracy.

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[22] The new Panopticon and the Communications Revolution of ARGENPRESS Presentation at the International Workshop in Havana, Cuba: "Alternative Media and Social Networks", December 2011.

[23] http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs/geneva/civil-society-declaration.pdf
[All the of the URLs referenced were accessed between March and April 2012]

4

MEDIA ETHICS AND CITIZEN JOURNALISM

Philip Lee

4.1 Introduction

> *The emergence of internet-based media has highlighted the need to acknowledge the right of all (and not just members of the professionalised, privileged and largely white, male elite) to communicate in the main or alternative public spheres.[1]*

The public sphere is usually understood to be the place where citizens exchange ideas, information, attitudes, and opinions in order to influence political action. There has been rich and stimulating discussion of how the public sphere is to be conceptualized ever since Jürgen Habermas published his first book on the theme in 1962. Its publication in English in 1989 as *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* was the occasion for considerable debate about the relationship between state and society, prospects for greater democracy, and the role of the media.

One consequence was a shift of emphasis towards participatory politics understood as not merely an activity that takes place in a narrowly defined political context, but as one that can be realized in the social and

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[1] Keeble, 2009

cultural spheres as well. This conceptualization of participation – which resonates well with thinking that emerged in Latin America in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s from scholars such as Paulo Freire, Néstor García Canclini and Jesús Martín-Barbero – views public space demo-cratically "as the creation of procedures whereby those affected by general social norms and collective political decisions can have a say in their formulation, stipulation, and adoption."[2]

American critical theorist Nancy Fraser, a noted feminist thinker concerned with articulating and disentangling the complexities of justice, contested the stratifications and exclusions implicit in Ha-bermas's analysis, arguing that "participatory parity is essential to a democratic public sphere and that rough socioeconomic parity is a pre-condition of participatory parity" (Fraser, 1997, p. 136). At the same time she called for critical study of the ways in which social inequality taints deliberation within publics, how inequality affects relations among publics, how publics are differentially empowered or segmented, and how some are involuntarily enslaved and subordinated to others[3].

At the same time as this theoretical debate was taking place, far more rapid and in many ways f a r more exciting developments were happening in the field of communications technology. The evolution of the Internet, commercialized only in 1995, can be pictured in three phases. From 1969 until about 1994, e- mail and remote log-on to large computer systems were the dominant uses of what became the Internet. Almost all the traffic consisted of one-to-one connections. The creation of the World Wide Web launched the second phase of the Internet, which enabled people to broadcast pages to thousands of surfers at the same time. The addition of "one-to-many" applications and graphics on most Web pages led to a rapid increase in Internet traffic.

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[2] Benhabib, 1994, p. 87
[3] (Ibid. p. 137).

New social media began the third, game-changing phase characterized by "many-to-many" applications that enabled all sorts of different groups to self-organize and share content, ideas, opinions, and software from sites all around the world. As with most new technologies, social media found their initial – and most popular – application in providing entertainment. But, they are already changing the way government services are delivered, how companies meet customers' needs, how students learn, how non-governmental organizations do their work, how political campaigns are run, and how religious institutions connect to their members.

The social uses of media apart, one field that has been profoundly shaken by the advent of digital technologies, social media and user-generated content is that of professional journalism. The old paradigm, as expressed by reporter and political commentator Walter Lippmann, was that journalism's role was to act as a mediator or translator between the public and policy-making elites. The philosopher John Dewey, however, believed that decisions should only be made after discussion and debate in the public sphere and that journalism should do more than simply pass on information: it should weigh the consequences of the policies being enacted.

In an age in which communication is being democratized through the development of interactive digital technologies, where traditional journalism fails, citizen journalism steps in:

> *Well-organized mass social movements, using their own means*
> *of communication, are indispensable as forms of popular educa-*
> *tion as well as of mobilization. Resistance to the engines of*
> *global inequality and destruction is essential; genuinely demo-*

cratic public spheres are arguably both a precondition and an outcome of that process.[4]

The ground beneath the profession of journalism has radically shifted under pressure from reinterpretations of good citizenship and good governance, the role and identity of different publics, and, of course, exponential developments in communication technologies. Previously, a journalist (one who conveys information about day-to-day events) was a trained and paid professional working for an established organisation in mainstream media (print, radio, television). Now, a journalist is conceived of as anyone who mediates between an event and an audience, whether via a formal outlet or an informal network. Inevitably, this has led to a questioning of roles and standards:

It appears that there are two contrasting theories of journalism … One consists of established standards and practices that emanate from print and broadcast journalism and the belief that journalism has a social responsibility to inform citizens and nurture democracy, while the other is informed by suspicion of centrally managed, traditional media conglomerates and a belief, inspired by the open architecture of the Internet and the flexibility of Web publishing, that citizens can participate in democracy by creating their own journalism.[5]

Rather than taking an "us-and-them" approach to traditional and alternative media, it may be more fruitful to consider how they interact and might complement each other according to circumstance. How do they create informed public opinion that can be harnessed for political and social change? What are their ethical values?

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[4] Hackett, 2010, p. 13
[5] Berkman and Shumway, 2003, p. 67

4.2 Engaged Dialogue as a Basis for Media Ethics

One starting point is to briefly examine the concept of engaged dialogue – which involves the desire to hear and understand what other people are saying and how they see the world – as a better model than merely reporting or passing on information. Engaged dialogue is what Adam Kahane calls "deep conversation" and here the potential of alternative media to challenge the conventional role of mainstream media is thrown into relief.

Kahane models four ways of talking and listening. The first is "downloading", consisting of polite, socially acceptable, conventional exchanges in which people do not listen carefully and nothing new is explored. The second is "debating", when people actively search for new information or perspectives and engage in argument. The third is "reflective dialogue", characterized by placing oneself in the position or circumstances of another person and seeing oneself through his or her eyes and ears. The fourth and most powerful is "generative dialogue" in which two or more people experience a sense of common purpose and are fully engaged with what is taking place and its potential for change. The premise is simple:

> *The way we talk and listen expresses our relationship with the world. When we fall into the trap of telling and of not listening, we close ourselves off from being changed by the world and we limit ourselves to being able to change the world only by force. But when we talk and listen with an open mind and an open heart and an open spirit, we bring forth our better selves and a better world.*[6]

Engaged dialogue, particularly its "generative" form, is the most democratic, in which everyone is listened to and everyone can take

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[6] Kahane, 2004, p. 4

part on an equal footing. It is reminiscent of the talking circle, a tradi-tional instrument for dealing with conflicts, misconceptions, disagree-ments, or deeper problems that interfere with the everyday concerns of a person or a community. Talking circles are where people can search for new directions, abandoning the old, making amends, righting wrongs, and creating new pathways toward conflict resolution and possible reconciliation. They represent a model of "integrative conver-sation" that reinforces the skills of listening attentively, making connec-tions, and working cooperatively to address problems and challenges. Individuals place their community in the foreground of their thinking and themselves in the background in order to participate in a conver-sation that involves:

> *A genuine exchange of ideas, feelings, perspectives, opinions, and so forth, where for each person involved there emerges a sense of self as part of the whole. To participate in integrative conversation, one accepts responsibility not only for actively lis-tening to every perspective, but for creating an integrative story along the way. In doing so, the underlying dynamics of power shift from traditionally myopic, self- centred, and rigid to inclu-sive, interconnected, and fluid.[7]*

Independent media, alternative media, and community media offer possibilities for communicative action, deep conversation, and genera-tive dialogue. They also challenge the hegemony of traditional mass media enterprises by increasingly providing organized material that is (to a certain, as yet ill-defined extent) credible and reliable. Since com-mercial media are unlikely willingly to diminish their profitability any time soon, and since there will always be a demand for independent public service media, we might imagine a future scenario in which there

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[7] Cowan and Adams, 2002, p.3

will be three tiers of media activity that are interwoven and which interact. There will be some kind of public service media at the (inter)national level, offering credible in-depth news, information and opinion mainly focused on political, economic, and cultural issues. There will be both independent and commercial media at the national level, offering credible but probably less structured news, information, and opinion mainly focused on partisan interests. There will be community media at the ultra-local level, offering highly partisan news, information and opinion mainly focused on small groups of followers. People will dip in and out of all three tiers to varying degrees.

This model has implications for the shapers of news, information, and opinion. In future, they are likely to be far more diverse in ethnicity, social and educational background. They will have specialist knowledge relevant to the level at which they are working, probably having been educated or having lived in a particular context. They will work to different formal and informal deadlines using multiple media (text, audio and video) and they will be networked with specialists and non-specialists. If they are paid, they may, as a consequence, work for several different organizations and possibly from home rather than in an office. They will be addressing multiple audiences in different ways and, in common with the best professional journalists, they will need to spend considerable time verifying, interpreting and explaining in order to gain and maintain credibility. They will also need to work as transparently as possible if they are to win and keep the trust of editors and the public.

In carrying out their tasks, these public communicators – the new creators of opinion in society – will interact in a form of symbiotic public journalism that has never been seen before. The problem for their different audiences will be to sift fact from fiction, insight from opinion, truth from falsehood. Not every public communicator will abide by professional codes of journalistic practice (if they ever did) and

most will not have the long-term professional infrastructure of the best media institutions. All of which poses key ethical questions for citizen journalism.

4.3 What Is Citizen Journalism and What Are The Ethical Questions It Raises?

Writing in the series *Challenges* published by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, John Kelly observes that citizen journalism's supporters claim six ways it benefits public communication:

- It brings experts into the reporting process so that stories can be more accurate and nuanced.
- It makes possible the coverage of events that the mainstream media might otherwise miss.
- It can save money.
- Through blogs especially, it can influence the news agenda or 'resuscitate' stories that mainstream media might have let die.
- It can demystify the journalistic process.
- It can build a sense of community, increasing the understanding, of, and participation in, civic life.[8]

The concept of citizen journalism is based upon ordinary people who, while not professionally paid journalists, are nevertheless playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing, commenting on and disseminating news and information. Jay Rosen, media critic and professor of journalism at New York University, says, "When the people formerly known as the audience employ the press tools they have in their possession to inform one another, that's citizen journalism."

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[8] Kelly, 2009, pp. 26-28

Observers argue that citizen journalism should not be confused with community journalism or civic journalism, both of which are practiced by professional journalists. Collaborative journalism is also a separate concept and is the practice of professional and non-professional journalists working together. Citizen journalism is a specific combination of both citizen media and user-generated content. Juxtaposing the term "citizen," with its notions of good citizenship and civic responsibility, with that of "journalism," underscores the ideological link between the practice of journalism and its relation to the political and public sphere.

Put simply, citizen journalism is when private individuals do what professional journalists do – report information but with different motivations. That information can take many forms, from a podcast editorial to a report about a city council meeting on a blog. It can include text, pictures, audio and video. But it's basically about communicating information of some kind. The other main feature of citizen journalism is that today it is almost exclusively found online. The Internet gave ordinary people the ability to transmit information globally. That was a power once reserved for governments, media corporations and news agencies.

Citizen journalism can take many forms. Steve Outing of Poynter.org – "a school that exists to ensure that our communities have access to excellent journalism—the kind of journalism that enables us to participate fully and effectively in our democracy" – and others have identified two major categories of citizen journalism. The first is *Semi-Independent Citizen Journalism* which involves citizens contributing, in one form or another, to existing professional news sites. For example, readers posting comments on stories done by professional reporters; readers adding their information to articles done by professional journalists; readers actively working with professional

reporters to put together a story; and reader blogs that are incorporated into professional news websites.

The second category is *Independent Citizen Journalism* which involves citizen journalists working in ways that are fully independent of traditional, professional news outlets, i.e. blogs in which individuals can report on events in their communities or offer commentary on the issues of the day; video feeds to community television stations; phone-in programmes on community radio.

In 2010 the two US founders of the National Association of Citizen Journalists (NACJ), Ron Ross and Susan Carson Cormier, e-published their *Handbook for Citizen Journalists* "dedicated to the tens of thousands of citizen journalists around the world who are making a difference in their villages, towns, states and nations by picking up the slack left by the changing journalistic climate."

Focused entirely on the USA, the authors describe citizen journalists as:

> *Information innovators, digital publishing pioneers, news trailblazers who are cutting a new media swath into the 21st century. They are aggressive trendsetters, media revolutionaries at work transforming the way news is written, produced and delivered. Some work with limited tools. When resources or the latest technology are not available, they innovate ways to get their message out. They do what they can with what they have and without restraint of word or limitation of technique[9].*

A key issue for the authors is the issue of press freedom and the relationship between professional journalism and citizen (or community) journalism. Since the 20th century professional journalists have been seen as the lynchpins of the links between political society and civil

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[9] Ross and Carson Cormier, 2010, p. 21

society. Despite notable attempts by governments to control information and the mass media, independent journalism has been seen as the way to introduce checks-and-balances and to urge public accountability.

Indeed, the public service broadcasting ethic stood or fell by the notion that in order to retain their licenses a small number of recognized and regulated sources should be tasked with a mission to educate, inform and entertain the public in certain ways. Even newspapers were supposed to be editorially and financially independent:

> *The public-service model was based on the idea that neither the market nor the State could adequately meet the public-service objectives of broadcasting and act in the public interest; indeed, it was felt that the public interest does not coincide either with private interests or the interests of the political powers that be.[10]*

Today, of course, that picture has changed considerably. The Web facilitates interactive media offerings of a public service nature, which may be commercial or non-commercial, and may be produced by charities, activists, academics, government, other organisations, and new or established companies. Yet the principle remains, and while traditional journalism was and is held to support the public service ethic with editorial principles of honesty, balance, and objectivity:

> *Citizen journalism is a more horizontal and conversational sharing of news, which is 'always unfinished, and continually under development' … Thus, the audience is not only connected vertically to people in power, such as editors and politicians, but also horizontally to each other, enabling them to mobilize. The flow of information is no longer controlled from the top.[11]*

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[10] Public Broadcasting Why? How?, 2001, p. 10
[11] Jurrat, 2011, p. 7

For many commentators, this is where the problem lies. How to en-sure that citizen or community journalism is pursued in ways that are ethical when "Credibility is the ultimate value of mass communication whether the medium is a traditional newspaper (in print or online) or a blog."[12]

4.4 A Code of Ethics for Citizen Journalism

Research carried out in 2012 and 2013 by WACC has revealed that there are very few guidelines or codes of ethics relating to citizen or community journalism. In contrast, there are countless codes of ethics for social media, mostly written from the perspective of large corporations or professional media houses seeking to regulate their employees' use of social media as sources or personal channels of communication. Although UNESCO has a web site dedicated to Pro-fessional Journalistic Standards and Codes of Ethics[13] and there is also a collection of codes of journalism ethics in Europe at EthicNet[14], neither has so far turned its attention to citizen journalism, perhaps for the simple reason that both sites deal with what is understood to be the well-established and traditionally ring-fenced profession of traditional journalism.

One of the earliest ethical codes for bloggers was published in the *Weblog Handbook: Practical Advice on Creating and Maintaining Your Weblog* (2002) by Rebecca Blood. The author takes a hands-on ap-proach from her perspective as an early blogger. However, she does provide key guidelines:

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[12] Elliott and Decker, 2011, p. 244

[13] http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/freedom-of-expression/professional-journalistic-standards-and-code-of-ethics/key-concepts/

[14] http://ethicnet.uta.fi/ethicnet_collection_of_codes_of_ journa-lism_ethics_in_europe

- Publish as fact only that which you believe to be true. If your statement is speculation, say so.
- If material exists online, link to it when you reference it. Linking to referenced material allows readers to judge for themselves the accuracy and insightfulness of your statements.
- Publicly correct any misinformation.
- Write each entry as if it could not be changed; add to, but do not rewrite or delete, any entry.
- Disclose any conflict of interest.
- Note questionable and biased sources.

A Blogger's Code of Ethics (2003) was also proposed by Jonathan Dube, editorial director for CBC.ca and an award-winning print journalist who created cyberjournalist.net. The principles were adapted from the code of ethics used by the Society of Professional Journalists. It offers sound advice that still holds good[15]:

- Bloggers should be honest and fair in gathering, reporting and interpreting information. Bloggers should:
- Never plagiarize.
- Identify and link to sources whenever feasible. The public is entitled to as much information as possible on sources' reliability.
- Make certain that Weblog entries, quotations, headlines, photos and all other content do not misrepresent.
- They should not oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context.
- Never distort the content of photos without disclosing what has been changed. Image enhancement is only acceptable for technical clarity. Label montages and photo illustrations.

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[15] http://www. cyberjournalist.net/news/000215.php

- Never publish information they know is inaccurate – and if publishing questionable information, make it clear it's in doubt.
- Distinguish between advocacy, commentary and factual information. Even advocacy writing and commentary should not misrepresent fact or context.
- Distinguish factual information and commentary from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two.
- Ethical bloggers treat sources and subjects as human beings deserving of respect. Bloggers should:
- Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by Weblog content. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.
- Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.
- Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of information is not a license for arrogance.
- Recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention. Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy.
- Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.
- Be cautious about identifying juvenile suspects, victims of sex crimes and criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges.
- Bloggers should:
- Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.
- Explain each Weblog's mission and invite dialogue with the public over its content and the bloggers' conduct.

- Disclose conflicts of interest, affiliations, activities and personal agendas.
- Deny favoured treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence content.
- When exceptions are made, disclose them fully to readers.
- Be wary of sources offering information for favours. When accepting such information, disclose the favours.
- Expose unethical practices of other bloggers.
- Abide by the same high standards to which they hold others.

In an article published in the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, Martin Kuhn criticised Dube's code for not addressing the human dialogue and interactive nature of blogs. Kuhn writes, "A code of blogging ethics should be both normatively based, drawing upon the interactive nature of blogs, and dialogically derived" (Kuhn, 2007, p. 21). He produced a blend of values derived from ethics scholarship and a survey of blog responses to offer the following:

1. **Promote interactivity**
   - Post to your blog on a regular basis
   - Visit and post on other blogs
   - Respect blog etiquette
   - Attempt to be entertaining, interesting, and/or relevant

2. **Promote free expression**
   - Do not restrict access to your blog by specific individuals or groups
   - Do not self-censor by removing posts or comments once they are published
   - Allow and encourage comments on your blog

3. **Strive for factual truth**
   - Never intentionally deceive others
   - Be accountable for what you post

4. **Be as transparent as possible**

- Reveal your identity as much as possible (name, photo, background info, etc.)
- Reveal your personal affiliations and conflicts of interest
- Cite and link to all sources referenced in each post

5. Promote the human element in blogging
   - Minimize harm to others when posting information
   - Promote community by linking to other blogs and keeping a "blogroll"
   - Build relationships by responding to e-mails and comments regularly

The *Handbook for Citizen Journalists* (2010), written by Ron Ross and Susan Carson Cormier, offers something of a combination of the two, focusing on core values. What follows is a summary.

4.4.1 Freedom of the Press

The First Amendment to the Bill of Rights that went into effect on 15 December 1791 states that, "Congress shall make no law … abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press." On 10 December 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It includes Article 19, which states, "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

4.4.2 Power of the Truth

"Truth does not become more true by virtue of the fact that the entire world agrees with it, nor less so even if the whole world disagrees with it." Moses Maimonides

Just because someone believes something should be true, does not make it so and determining whether something is true should be a fundamental goal of all journalists. Citizen journalists who are working to inform their communities should focus on this concept, the concept of finding the truth – not reiterating something that is commonly believed by others.

4.4.3 Vox Populi – Voice of the People

Many hyperlocal and niche stories go untold because professional journalists do not believe there is enough interest in the subject or because they are not on the scene of the event. Citizen journalists are the eyes and ears of their communities. They are on the scene when many professional journalists are elsewhere.

4.4.4 Accountability to the Public

Citizen journalists' highest obligation is to the public. They are answerable for the truth, fairness and usefulness of whatever they write. The Hearst Newspapers' Statement of Professional Principles says it well, "We place our readers' interests above all others and dedicate ourselves to the principles of truthfulness, fairness and independence."

4.4.5 Accuracy

One of the first rules of journalism is to be accurate. Without accuracy, citizen journalists have no credibility, integrity or respect from their readers or sources. Citizen journalists will excel if they provide content that is accurate, in context and free from bias.

4.4.6 Whole Story

The importance of getting the whole story can never be understated. No story should be complete until it presents all sides in a fair and un-biased manner, and includes all pertinent facts.

4.4.7 Presumption of Innocence

A citizen journalist should not function as an arm of law enforce-ment or as an advocate for a defendant by speculating about the guilt or innocence of someone referred to as a "prime suspect," "person of interest" or defendant.

4.4.8 Importance of Context

Because the same information might be interpreted differently, de-pending on the circumstances, journalists must be vigilant in their efforts to paint the full picture. They must tell their audiences who said what, and when, where, why and how they said it.

4.4.9 Respect of All People

Citizen journalists must be sensitive, respectful and recognize in-dividuals' rights to privacy. Citizen journalists should be extra sensi-tive and use common standards of decency when dealing with children or people who are not used to being in the news or who are unexpected-ly in the news.

4.4.10 Limitation of Harm

Many news stories are about people – human beings who deserve to be treated fairly and with respect. Citizen journalists pursuing im-

portant stories are not automatically given the right to take any photo, ask any question or quote any witness. Even the process of gathering information can cause distress and even permanent harm to innocent people. An ethical reporter will treat the people they deal with in the same way they would like to be treated, whether they are sources for stories or subjects of them.

4.4.11 Avoidance of Conflicts of Interest

Good citizen journalists keep themselves free from obligations of any kind towards news sources and newsmakers. Even the appearance of conflict of interest is avoided. The rule is to maintain professional objectivity and preserve a clear difference between legitimate business relationships and personal friendships.

4.4.12 Immediate Correction of Mistakes

In the haste of covering the news, legitimate mistakes do happen. When they do, journalists have the responsibility to admit their errors and correct them promptly and completely. It's that simple.

4.4.13 Courage

Citizen journalists ask their questions with boldness and with respect. But citizen journalism is also being practiced in places where a substantial measure of extra courage is required just to snap a photo or upload a video. In many totalitarian countries, citizen journalists spend a lot of time trying to figure out how to stay out of jail, how to avoid beatings and how to keep from "disappearing." Without the courage to ask questions, research relevant facts, seek verification and face bullies with audacity, few truly important stories will ever be told.

4.4.14 Shame of Plagiarism

To plagiarize the work of another is considered one of the most serious breaches of journalist ethics. In most cases, professional journalists caught plagiarizing are fired or are severely disciplined. Citizen journalists may not lose their jobs or even suffer any repercussions for plagiarism. However, they should experience personal shame, for it is a reprehensible act.

Select, copy, paste may be the simplest definition of plagiarism because to plagiarize, is to intentionally present someone else's words and/or ideas as your own. But more than breaking the law, plagiarism is a breach of trust with the audience. Here's the principle: Legitimate citizen journalists never plagiarize.

4.4.15 Integrity

The Preamble of the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics says, "Professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist's credibility." Citizen journalists must join the many serious professional journalists who still adhere to the ethics and standards that made journalism a valuable and honourable profession. Integrity is the virtue of basing all of an individual's words and deeds on an unswerving framework of personally-held, well- developed principles. This means one must know what is right and wrong, good and evil, helpful and hurtful, and then act accordingly, even at personal cost (Ross and Carson Cormier, 2010).

It is interesting that the authors also refer to the Code of Ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists. Many people might assume that citizen journalists conform to such norms, although here we need to make a careful distinction between those whose aims are genuinely democratic and inclusive and those whose aims are anti-democratic and exclusive:

> *In an environment in which external controls are almost wholly absent, self-imposed constraints on freedom become crucial. This is certainly true for users, but it also applies to journalists whose professional norms and occupational roles are stretched in new directions by the online medium's immediacy, by emerging new formats for expressing their own voice, and by radically different relationships with people outside the newsroom.*[16]

Most recently, ARTICLE 19 – an international human rights organisation, founded in 1986, which defends and promotes freedom of expression and freedom of information worldwide – has articulated a policy paper titled "The Right to Blog" (2013). It puts forward a set of recommendations addressed to state actors and policy-makers about what they should do to promote and protect the rights of bloggers domestically and internationally. It also gives practical advice to bloggers about their rights and explains how – and in what situations – they can invoke some of the privileges and defences that traditional journalists have found vital to the integrity of their work.

ARTICLE 19 argues that it is no longer appropriate to define journalism and journalists by reference to some recognised body of training, or affiliation with a news entity or professional body. On the contrary, ARTICLE 19 believes that the definition of journalism should be functional, i.e. journalism is an activity that can be exercised by anyone. Accordingly, it argues that international human rights law must protect bloggers just as it protects journalists. The policy paper, therefore, addresses the key areas that bloggers are likely to face, that is: licensing, real-name registration (vs. anonymity), accreditation, the protection of sources, protection from violence, legal liability and ethical responsibility and suggests ways for them to be addressed.

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[16] Singer, 2011, p. 859

The key recommendations quoted verbatim from the policy paper are as follows:

- Relevant legal standards should reflect the fact that "journalism" consists of disseminating information and ideas to the public by any means of communication. As such, it is an activity which can be exercised by anyone.
- Any definition of the term "journalist" should be broad, to include any natural or legal person who is regularly or professionally engaged in the collection and dissemination of information to the public via any means of mass communication.
- Bloggers should never be required to obtain a licence to blog.
- Bloggers should never be required to register with the government or other official bodies.
- Accreditation schemes must meet international freedom of expression standards and should ensure that:
    - all applicants, including bloggers, who meet the minimum requirements defined in the law should be automatically issued with a "press" facilitation card;
    - press cards should only be required to get access to events or premises where there is a clear need to limit attendance based on limited space or the potential for disruption;
    - the conditions for obtaining a press card should be based on the overall public interest and not on considerations such as affiliation with a professional association or degree in journalism.
- Legal commentators, including bloggers, should be allowed to use social media from court rooms if the hearings are open to the public.

- To the extent that they are engaged in journalistic activity, bloggers should be able to rely on the right to protect their sources.
- Any request to disclose sources should be strictly limited to the most serious cases. It should be approved only by an independent judge in a fair and public hearing with a possibility of an appeal.
- State authorities must guarantee the safety of bloggers using a variety of measures, including the prohibition of crimes against freedom of expression in their domestic laws.
- States must take reasonable steps to protect bloggers and other individuals actively engaged in online com- munities when they know or ought to know of the existence of a real and immediate risk to the life of an identified blogger as a result of the criminal acts of a third party.
- State authorities must carry out independent, speedy and effective investigations into threats or violent at- tacks against bloggers or other individuals engaged in journalistic activity online.
- The laws governing the liability of bloggers, including defamation law, incitement and other speech-related offences, must comply with international freedom of expression standards.
- As a general rule, bloggers should not be held liable for comments made by third parties on their blogs in circumstances where they have not intervened or modified those comments.
- For certain types of content, for example content that is defamatory or infringes copyright, consideration should be given to adopting 'notice-and-notice' approaches whereby bloggers would be required to pass the complaint to the orig-

inal maker of the statement at issue, without removing the material upon notice.

- The term "duties and responsibilities" in Article 19 of the ICCPR and Article 10 of the European Convention must be interpreted flexibly to take into account the particular situation of the blogger in question.

- Bloggers should not be forced to abide by the ethical codes or codes of conduct developed by traditional media and should not be coerced or given an incentive to join self-regulatory bodies for traditional media.

- Bloggers may decide to follow the ethical standards of traditional media of their own accord. They can also develop their own code of practice either for their own blogs or for associations they voluntarily join. Alternative dispute resolution systems should also be encouraged.

- When bloggers produce a piece for a traditional newspaper, they should be subject to the newspaper's editorial control, and abide by the ethical standards of journalists[17].

4.5 Gender – The Missing Link

There is a significant omission in all the discussions around a code of ethics for citizen journalism: gender ethical guidelines. Since 1995 the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) – a non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting communication rights – has coordinated the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP). It is a longitudinal research and advocacy initiative on gender in the world news media, carried out in 5-year cycles to moni-

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[17] The Right to Blog, 2013

tor change in selected indicators of gender in news media content. In 2010 data was collected in 108 countries for the fourth in the series, which revealed that women make up only 24% of the people heard, read about or seen in the news[18].

Two years earlier the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) had launched its Ethical Journalism Initiative (http://ethicaljournalisminitiative.org/en) to confront ongoing discrimination in the news and to reconnect journalists to their mission by enforcing core ethical standards. Challenging sensationalism and stereotypes, checking facts, abiding by codes of conduct, supporting independent self-regulatory bodies are some of the actions identified to uphold media quality and rebuild the public's trust in the news. The IFJ recognized that fair gender portrayal is one of the issues to be given priority if media hope to fully reflect the role women play in society. The widespread use of digital media platforms, social media, and the development of online news are clearly part of this new paradigm.

As a result of GMMP 2010, WACC and IFJ cooperated to produce a *Learning Resource Kit for Gender-Ethical Journalism and Media House Policy* in an effort to redress gender disparities in news media content. Arguing that the primary reason for gaps in coverage is that gender has not yet been integrated into the news agenda, and that there is still an assumption within the profession that gender is at best a "niche" issue, and that events and issues traditionally categorised as hard news can actually benefit from a gender perspective, the Handbook's authors said:

> *It is time for the news media – and media professionals – to realise the importance of gender as a key lens through which all*

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[18] This report is available at
http://www.whomakesthenews.org/images/stories/website/gmmp_reports/2010/global/gmmp_global_report_en.pdf

> *events and issues must be examined in order to tell the whole sto-*
> *ry. For coverage to become more inclusive and balanced, not on-*
> *ly reporters/correspondents but the range of professionals who*
> *together shape media content – including visuals – have to be*
> *conscious of the need to factor gender into the process of decid-*
> *ing what to cover and how to cover it.[19]*

Why is gender important? In nearly every society, traditional gender roles privilege men at the expense of women. Through the imposition and continuous reinforcement of rigid gender norms, society deprives women of rights, power, and resources. Traditional gender roles drive women's lower economic status, low literacy and education, poorer health outcomes, and greater exposure to gender-based violence. Millennium Development Goal 3 is "To promote gender equality and empower women." Gender equity implies fairness and justice in the distribution of opportunities, responsibilities, and benefits available to men and women, and the strategies and processes used to achieve gender equality.

Gender equality is equal treatment of women and men in laws and policies, and equal access to resources and services within communities, and society at large. However, women are not the only ones harmed by traditional gender norms and inequality; men and transgender individuals also suffer negative consequences. Transforming traditional gender roles is critical to reducing the damage that those roles inflict on everyone. Increased gender equality – the equal treatment of all individuals, regardless of gender – benefits all members of society and achieving equality means working with people of all genders:

> *In the final analysis, unless gender is acknowledged as one of sev-*
> *eral factors that affect people's experience of almost everything,*

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[19] Learning Resource Kit, 2012, p. 9

and accepted as one of the angles to be explored while covering anything, the media will continue to tell only part of the story – whatever that story may be.[20]

In their review of existing codes of ethics, the authors of the *Learning Resource Kit* identified elements of codes that are comprehensive from a gender perspective and which should figure in any generic code of ethics for citizen journalism:

1. Recognition of different forms of diversity in the implementation context. The codes spell out various forms of diversity relevant to the locality, such as race, ethnicity, religion, sex, ability, sexuality, age and class.

2. Clear delineation of unacceptable practice, including:
   - Making discriminatory and/or denigrating reference to a person/group
   - Presenting a person/group in a prejudicial and/or pejorative context
   - Publishing material intended or is likely to engender hostility/hatred towards a person or group based on their characteristics
   - Publishing material that contributes to dehumanizing a person/group
   - Publishing material that encourages discrimination on grounds of characteristics of group
   - Portraying a person/group in a negative light by placing gratuitous emphasis on their characteristics
   - Demeaning the person/group
   - Condemning people on the basis of their identity

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[20] Learning Resource Kit, 2012, Book 1, p. 12

- Promoting hatred, intolerance, discrimination and violence towards a person/group on the basis of their characteristics
- Using insulting expressions which may cause moral or physical injury
- Creating or processing information that jeopardizes human rights and freedoms

3. Recognition and respect of diversity of opinion
4. Placing responsibility on media professionals to develop awareness of gender equality as integral human rights
5. Articulating non-discrimination as a responsibility of journalists
6. Articulating the need to contribute to democratizing media as a duty of journalists for the purpose of increasing popular participation, strengthening identity and building a culture of peace
7. Clear identification of:
    - The entities responsible for code's application
    - The entities to whom enquiries should be directed
    - The entities responsible for dealing with enquiries
    - Procedures for complaints
8. Gender-specific provisions address the following concerns:
    - Equitable portrayal of all genders
    - Respect for human rights
    - Negative portrayal
    - Gender stereotyping
    - Stigmatization of persons on account of gender
    - Victimization
    - Exploitation
    - Degradation
    - Language and terminology choice

- Equal treatment
- Inappropriate or irrelevant emphasis on gender, physical characteristics, family status or marital status
- Gender balance of commentators and experts[21]

4.6 Next Steps

There is considerable evidence that a code of ethics can be derived from existing thinking and practice and to which citizen journalists might voluntarily subscribe. While imposing a licensing system would infringe freedom of expression and might even be counterproductive, citizen journalists with integrity will welcome a framework in which what they do can be recognized as responsible and accountable and as meeting accepted standards. At the same time, we should not ignore the wider questions raised by Stuart Allan at the First WSIS+10 review meeting, "Towards Knowledge Societies for Peace and Sustainable Development" held at UNESCO, Paris[22].

In a Session on "Citizen Journalism", Allan listed the following key questions which – in his opinion and that of many others – remain to be addressed:

- To what extent is there a difference between citizen journalism, citizen-generated content and social media? How do they each reshape the public sphere?

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[21] Learning Resource Kit, 2012, Book 1, p. 29

[22] The Multistakeholder WSIS+10 Review Event, 25-27 February 2013, hosted by UNESCO and co-organized with the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), is part of a process examining the achievements of the Action Lines that emerged from the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) meetings in 2003 and 2005. Outcomes will feed directly into subsequent review meetings and reported to UNESCO's Executive Board and to the 37th session of the General Conference of UNESCO (November 2013).The intention is also to integrate findings into the UN MDGs review process and into a possible post-2015 sustainable development framework.

- How have mainstream media outlets incorporated citizen journalism, and what effect has this had on content and coverage? How does it vary across regions? Do the same dynamics hold across platforms (e.g. broadcast and satellite television, newspapers, online news sites)?

- How is citizen journalism reshaping institutional configurations in the mainstream media? How does it impact the news agenda, and global and regional news flows?

- If a crucial task of self-regulatory mechanisms is to foster public trust in the media, what does this mean for citizen journalism and self-regulation of these media?

- How have professional media outlets adapted to a more competitive media environment?

- Do citizen journalists constitute a 5th Estate? How do they act as watchdogs of the mainstream press, and what impact do they have the nature of journalism? What new issues arise concerning accuracy and verifiability? Are there mechanisms or self-correcting systems that could be put in place to prevent the spread of false information?

- What specific threats do citizen journalists face, and what can be done to address them?

Within the above framework, it would be possible to conceive of a research project to be carried out in a country of the South where communication rights are generally guaranteed (such as India) which would explore the key questions raised by Stuart Allan at the same time as evolving a generic code of ethics for citizen journalism that is both practical and acceptable to professional and non-professional journalists alike.

One important issue is the protection and safety of journalists, including citizen journalists. On 12 April 2012 the UN Chief Executives

Board endorsed the *UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity*[23]. The Plan of Action aims to create a free and safe environment for journalists and media workers, both in conflict and non-conflict situations, with a view to strengthening peace, democracy and development worldwide. Its measures include, among other undertakings, the establishment of a coordinated inter-agency mechanism to handle issues related to the safety of journalists as well as assisting countries to develop legislation and mechanisms favourable to freedom of expression and information, and supporting their efforts to implement existing international rules and principles.

Section 1.5 of the Plan notes:

> *Without freedom of expression, and particularly freedom of the press, an informed, active and engaged citizenry is impossible. In a climate where journalists are safe, citizens find it easier to access quality information and many objectives become possible as a result: democratic governance and poverty reduction; conservation of the environment; gender equality and the empowerment of women; justice and a culture of human rights, to name a few. Hence, while the problem of impunity is not restricted to the failure to investigate the murders of journalists and media workers, the curtailment of their expression deprives society as a whole of their journalistic contribution and results in a wider impact on press freedom where a climate of intimidation and violence leads to self-censorship. In such a climate societies suffer because they lack the information needed to fully realize their potential. Efforts to end impunity with respect to crimes*

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[23]

http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/official_documents/un_plan_action_safety_en.pdf

> *against journalists must be associated with the defence and pro-*
> *tection of human rights defenders, more generally.*

Of specific interest is the following paragraph: "In addition, the protection of journalists should not be limited to those formally recognised as journalists, but should cover others, including community media workers and *citizen journalists and others who may be using new media as a means of reaching their audiences*." [Emphasis added.]

Section 1.17 underlines the need for special attention to be given to gender-specific issues: "Female journalists also face increasing dangers, highlighting the need for a gender-sensitive approach. In carrying out their professional duties, they often risk sexual assault, whether in the form of a targeted sexual violation, often in reprisal for their work; mob-related sexual violence aimed against journalists covering public events; or the sexual abuse of journalists in detention or captivity. Furthermore, many of these crimes are not reported as a result of powerful cultural and professional stigmas."

In local contexts, four areas may require further definition and elaboration:

- Strengthening public awareness of citizen journalism
- Training needs of citizen journalists
- Best practices in citizen journalism
- Cyberactivism and citizen engagement.

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5

UNEQUAL IN AN UNEQUAL WORLD: GENDER DIMENSIONS OF COMMUNICATION RIGHTS

Philip Lee

5.1 Background to the Debate

In 1948 the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and thirty-three years later, in 1981, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) entered into force. Yet it still took until 25 June 1993 for the UN World Conference on Human Rights to rededicate itself to "the global task of promoting and protecting all human rights and fundamental freedoms" and to affirm that "All human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated" by adopting what became known as the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (VDPA).

The VDPA paid particular attention to women's rights, declaring that:

> *The human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life, at the national, regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination*

on grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community.

The same section (I/18) went on to say:

Gender-based violence and all forms of sexual harassment and exploitation, including those resulting from cultural prejudice and international trafficking, are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person, and must be eliminated. This can be achieved by legal measures and through national action and international cooperation in such fields as economic and social development, education, safe maternity and health care, and social support.

Two years later, the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing (1995) focused on "Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power" and produced global commitments to advancing a wide range of women's rights. The momentum that gathered pace in Beijing led to the inclusion of gender equality and women's empowerment as one of the eight Millennium Development Goals (2000), addressing what many perceived as promises that had not been kept. The Beijing Conference was also notable for its focus on women and the media. In particular, Section J of the Platform for Action (234) said:

Women should be empowered by enhancing their skills, knowledge and access to information technology. This will strengthen their ability to combat negative portrayals of women internationally and to challenge instances of abuse of the power of an increasingly important industry. Self-regulatory mechanisms for the media need to be created and strengthened and approaches developed to eliminate gender-biased programming. Most women, especially in developing countries, are not able to

access effectively the expanding electronic information highways and therefore cannot establish networks that will provide them with alternative sources of information. Women therefore need to be involved in decision-making regarding the development of the new technologies in order to participate fully in their growth and impact.

Then came the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva (2003) and Tunis (2005), seen as an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between a widely recognized human rights culture and a rapidly developing information society as well as to tackle what was identified as the "digital divide". There was a particular concern that the WSIS process needed to pay special attention to how the emerging information and communication society could advance gender equality, protect traditional knowledge and cultures, and improve the situation of vulnerable and marginalized people.

WSIS was invaluable in providing an opportunity for civil society organizations to have a voice where previously they had been silent and to assess deficits and new opportunities. Immediately after WSIS 2005, representatives of civil society organizations issued the Statement "Much more could have been achieved" (18 December 2005). It argued that the outcomes would have been stronger if they had been founded on an *ethical framework* that was more just, equitable and sustainable:

In an age of economic globalization and commodification of knowledge, the ethics and values of justice, equity, participation and sustainability are imperative. Beyond Tunis, all stakeholders must be encouraged to weave ethics and values language into the working on semantic web knowledge structures. Communication rights and justice are about making human communities as technology's home and human relationships as technology's heart.

With regard to gender equality, the Statement commented on the need to provide capacity-building aimed at women's engagement at all levels in the shaping of an Information Society, including policy-making on infrastructure development, financing, and technological choice:

> *There is a need for real effort and commitment to transforming the masculinist culture embedded within existing structures and discourses of the Information Society which serves to reinforce gender disparity and inequality. Without full, material and engaged commitment to the principle of gender equality, women's empowerment and non-discrimination, the vision of a just and equitable Information Society cannot be achieved.*

5.2 Advances Since 2005

A fundamental principle underlies social change, communication for development and media democracy. It is that public and private debate, dialogue and conversation are essential if positive, long-term changes on key development issues are to be agreed and implemented. Such dialogue is most effective when a range of voices are empowered to be heard and acted upon. The same principle applies to the framing of policies and strategies at local, national, and international levels.

Access to information and knowledge is essential to the health of a democratic society for at least two reasons. First, it ensures that citizens make responsible, informed choices rather than acting out of ignorance or misinformation. Second, information serves a "checks and balances function" by ensuring that elected representatives can be held to account in carrying carry out the wishes of those who elected them. In many societies, an antagonistic relationship between media and government is a vital element of a fully functioning democracy and the role of the press is critical in disseminating information as a way of mediating between the state and all facets of civil society.

In information and communication societies, despite the proliferation of social media platforms and user-generated content, it is still essential to have a public media sector that supports democracy, is financially viable and editorially independent, and that serves the public interest. The public interest is defined as representing a plurality of voices both through multiple outlets and through a diversity of views and voices reflected within any one outlet.

ARTICLE 19 is an NGO that envisages a world where people are free to speak their opinions, to participate in decision-making and to make informed choices about their lives. In 2009 it published *The Camden Principles on Freedom of Expression and Equality*. Principle 9 covers the media:

> 9.1 *All media should, as a moral and social responsibility, play a role in combating discrimination and in promoting intercultural understanding, including by considering the following:*
>
>> i. *Taking care to report in context and in a factual and sensitive manner, while ensuring that acts of discrimination are brought to the attention of the public.*
>>
>> ii. *Being alert to the danger of discrimination or negative stereotypes of individuals and groups being furthered by the media.*
>>
>> iii. *Avoiding unnecessary references to race, religion, gender and other group characteristics that may promote intolerance.*
>>
>> iv. *Raising awareness of the harm caused by discrimination and negative stereotyping.*
>>
>> v. *Reporting on different groups or communities and giving their members an opportunity to speak and to be heard in a way that promotes a better understanding*

of them, while at the same time reflecting the perspectives of those groups or communities.

9.2 *Public service broadcasters should be under an obligation to avoid negative stereotypes of individuals and groups, and their mandate should require them to promote intercultural understanding and to foster a better understanding of different communities and the issues they face. This should include the airing of programmes which portray different communities as equal members of society.*

9.3 *Professional codes of conduct for the media and journalists should reflect equality principles and effective steps should be taken to promulgate and implement such codes.*

9.4 *Professional development programmes for media professionals should raise awareness about the role the media can play in promoting equality and the need to avoid negative stereotypes.*

ARTICLE 19 takes a rights-based position that is non-discriminatory and says that "people everywhere must be able to exercise their rights to freedom of expression and freedom of information. Without these rights, democracy, good governance and development cannot happen." A recent special report on Brazil looked at "Women on the Internet" (8 March 2013). While information and communication technologies have revolutionized the way women communicate and express their ideas, the report points out that new forms of censorship are threatening the free flow of online information. Also the infrastructure to access the Internet and the skills required to maximize the potential of user-generated content can lead to the exclusion of women:

For women, the Internet represents new opportunities and also new challenges to claim and fulfil their rights. It is also an important space for women's empowerment. The Internet grants access to information, enables their mobilisation and visibility,

and helps them create new forms of expression and participation in public life.

This perception is highlighted in a study by the Association for Progressive Communications (ACP) called "Going Visible: Women's Rights on the Internet" (October 2012). ACP argues that the internet has become an increasingly critical public sphere for the claiming of citizenship rights and civil liberties, including women's rights. It is a significant space for those who have little access to other kinds of "publics" due to discrimination – based on gender, age, economic status and sexual identity – to negotiate and claim their rights. ACP's study makes a series of recommendations:

To Governments and International Organisations

- Promote respect for human rights online and offline. Freedom of expression and opinion must be protected online, the same way they are protected offline. There is need to understand the nature of communications in the online and the offline worlds in order to correctly identify where these freedoms are exercised and what threats may be posed to these freedoms. Promote ICT use and a strategy of information, education and communication in online spaces to combat violence against women and girls and to enhance women's and girls' rights.
- Promote women's and girls' communication rights in ICT use and online spaces, encouraging their participation, content creation and freedom of expression.
- Engage in the political discussion about the promotion of internet development and internet governance with a vision of gender inclusion, gender justice and respect for human rights.
- Promote and encourage women's participation in decision-making processes in ICT policies to secure that women's and

girls' needs are properly considered, included and safeguarded. Protection and promotion of women's human rights cannot be left to private corporations, ISPs or individuals. States and international bodies have a moral and legal responsibility to uphold and safeguard the rights of women, both online and offline.

To The Private Sector

- Internet and telecommunications businesses such as social networking platforms, web hosting companies and mobile phone operators should develop corporate user policies and practices that respect women's rights. This includes the adequate representation of women in policy-making and standards-setting processes, and ensuring that policies and standards consider the safety and security of users.

To Civil Society Organisations

- Women's organisations are called on to take action and use ICTs for activism to combat violence against women, promote equality and build solidarity. Women should take actions to control technology and change power relations in the ICT field.
- Women's organizations must actively participate in movements for communication rights on the internet and affirm women's achievements and full participation in society, both online and offline.

5.3 Unequal in an Unequal World

Throughout history, women have been discriminated against and have generally enjoyed fewer political, legal, social and economic rights and opportunities than men. Yet, women's rights are basic rights and freedoms that all women and girls are entitled to as human beings. Human rights – as the *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action* affirmed – are shared by all women, men, girls and boys, and are enshrined in international agreements and law. The central concept is that every individual is entitled to rights equally, whatever their status in society.

The notion of women's rights within the framework of human rights was advanced because of traditional biases against the exercise of women's and girls' rights in favour of men and boys. In a society where women and men had unequal power, it was seen that women's rights needed to be specifically recognised and fought for. In this context, many women and men advocating for gender equality and women's rights define themselves as feminist. Feminism is, of course, a political movement and is broadly about increasing women's power relative to men's. Feminist advocacy challenges the inequalities between men and women in order to end the unequal distribution of power and resources that excludes women and other marginalized groups.

Today, unfortunately, discrimination against women continues to be widespread and can be found in every country and region of the world. Some of the challenges women face are new and not experienced by previous generations, such as HIV/AIDS, access to information and communication technologies, and new trends in macro-economic policies that worsen women's poverty. But many of them are not, such as violence against women and girls' lack of access to education. Achieving gender justice is a matter of guaranteeing basic rights and also a key means of addressing poverty and bringing about sustainable develop-

ment. Policies and practices that benefit women will also have other positive outcomes for the economy and society as a whole.

Speaking at the High-level side event on "Sustainable Development in an Unequal World" during the Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (20-22 June 2012), Michelle Bachelet, former Executive Director of UN Women and newly re-elected President of Chile said:

> *We need to place human rights and dignity and gender equality at the centre of the sustainable development discourse, but more than discourse: actions. We need to advance equality so that women and girls can reach their potential. Women's empower-ment and gender equality are fundamental to healthy societies and economies, and sustainable development. Women are on the frontlines, especially in rural areas, and their full participation is absolutely essential to address the key issues of sustainable food, water and energy.*

Later, in June 2013 and in the context of the Post-2015 Development Framework and Sustainable Development Goals, UN Women published *A Transformative Stand-alone Goal on Achieving Gender Equality, Women's Rights and Women's Empowerment: Imperatives and Key Components*. It stated:

> *A transformative stand-alone gender equality goal must be grounded in an understanding that the structural causes of gen-der-based inequality lie in systems of discrimination that are of-ten justified in the name of culture, history, or group identity, and policy rationalities which assume that the best way to achieve gender equality is to reduce the role of the state and liberate 'the market'. To address these systems of discrimination, and the in-stitutionalization of women's subordination that they create, the goal must seek to end violence against women and girls and pro-vide services to victims; end histories of underinvestment in ex-*

*panding women's and girls' capabilities and resources; and re-
verse the systematic marginalization of women from public and
private decision-making.*

In order to address the structural causes of gender-based discrimina-
tion and to support true transformation in gender relations, UN Women
proposed an integrated approach addressing three critical target areas:

- Freedom from violence against women and girls – Concrete
  actions to eliminate the debilitating fear and/or experience of
  violence must be a centrepiece of any future framework.
- Gender equality in the distribution of capabilities –
  knowledge, good health, sexual and reproductive health and
  reproductive rights of women and adolescent girls; and access
  to resources and opportunities, including land, decent work
  and equal pay to build women's economic and social security.
- Gender equality in decision-making power in public and pri-
  vate institutions, in national parliaments and local councils,
  the media and civil society, in the management and govern-
  ance of firms, and in families and communities.

The report argued that:

*Women's capacity to influence decision-making, whether in pub-
lic or private institutions, is intimately linked with their capabili-
ties. Having a voice and participating in the processes and deci-
sions that determine their lives is an essential aspect of women's
and girls' freedoms. Voice and influence in decision-making has
both intrinsic value as a sign of an individual's and groups' en-
joyment of democratic freedoms and rights, and can serve the in-
strumental function of ensuring that group-specific interests are
advanced. In the case of women, this could include influencing
public priorities and spending patterns to ensure adequate provi-
sion of services as well as economic and social security, and to
guarantee their physical integrity and reproductive rights.*

However, the report is oddly silent on one of the key mechanisms for strengthening voice and influence in decision-making at all levels and in all fields: *gender equality in access to information, communication and knowledge and to the technologies that help bring this about.* Digital platforms, user-generated content, and citizen journalism have the potential to meet this need.

The empowering use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) is closely connected to socio-economic development, and this potential for social transformation demands that everyone should have equitable access. Prevailing inequalities in access to ICTs throughout the world suggest that many groups are hindered by their social and economic circumstances from making use of ICTs. In relation to women, this inequality is often referred to as "the gender digital divide", resulting from social processes that marginalize women from technology, change and progress. The potential of ICTs is twofold: they can contribute to sustainable socio-economic development and promote gender equality. However, ICTs are not a panacea but have to be considered extremely useful and effective tools for challenging and changing existing power structures.

5.4 Conclusions

In *Ethics in the Information Society: The Nine 'P's[1]* (Globethics, 2013) the authors argue that justice and equity, care and compassion, participation, sharing, sustainability, and responsibility are fundamental in information and knowledge societies. With regard to gender, it states:

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[1] http://www.globethics.net/documents/4289936/13403256/
GE_texts_4_WSIS_web_final_cons.pdf/53fedc19-0475-4f34-bb9f-
0d588b09436f

Gender equality in access to information, communication, knowledge and decision-making is an important dimension of an inclusive and people-centre society. It includes ensuring parity in women's representation in high levels and decision-making.

As such it calls for "Building empowering capabilities of women and girls to use ICTs for education, formation and citizenship and for older persons in computer and internet literacy.

The three case studies that follow this short overview reflect the experiences of women's rights groups in India, South Africa and Turkey, which in their different contexts and according to their different needs are seizing upon digital communication technologies to advance the cause of gender justice and to advocate for greater public awareness of the issues at stake and for better political and social policies.

All three organizations support Globethics' own expression of "fundamental values for knowledge societies":

- Justice/equity is based on the inalienable human dignity of every human being and on their equality. Justice grows when people cultivate a deep respect towards each other. Fair and equal chances of access to information are a precondition for mutual understanding.

- Freedom of access to information, of expression, of believe and of decision is core for human dignity and human development. Freedom, equity and responsibility balance each other.

- Care and compassion is the ability for empathy, respect and support of the other. It leads to solidarity.

- Participation is the right and ability to participate in societal life and in decisions of concern.

- Sharing leads to, enables, and sustains relationships between human beings and strengthens communities. The ITCs enable

in an extraordinary way the sharing of information and knowledge.

- Sustainability as long term perspective for green technologies.

Responsibility is accountability for one's own actions. The level of responsibility has to correspond to the level of power, capacity and capability. Those with more resources bear greater responsibility.

6

NEPALI WOMEN USE NEW INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES TO ADVOCATE FOR POLICY CHANGE

Manju Thapa

Nepal, a rectangular east-west spread on the Asian map, sandwiched between China to the north and India to the south, is divided into three ecological regions: the northern Himalayan belt, the middle mountains (where most of the people live), and the narrow southern strip of plain, which grows most of the food crops. The country is divided into five development regions and 14 administrative zones, with 75 districts, although recent political changes have popularized the notion of a federalism-based state-nation, and which seems in the offing. Basically a feudal patriarchal society, Nepalese society has been experiencing a rapidly changing political scenario, economic policies and social awareness in recent decades that have brought about enormous transformations, and in which everyday lives are reconceptualised, reconstructed and lived, with new negotiations continually made between the personal and public[1].

Nepal, after a ten-year armed conflict led by the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) against the State and following the spring movement of 2006, has entered into a peace process and is trying to build an inclusive

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[1] Poudel, 2013

state. The existing constitution (the Interim Constitution 2007) has determined the progressive restructuring of the nation as the solution to the problems based on discrimination of gender, ethnicity, caste and religion to avoid repetition of the conflicts in the past. The Interim Constitution also includes a separate article for women's fundamental rights (Article 20). Yet, the challenge women in Nepal are still facing is their stereotyped role as oppressed and subservient to men. Regardless of all those commitments and policy reforms, no substantial change has come about in the overall situation of women.

Anthropological studies of contemporary South Asian society suggest that the construction of womanhood in Nepalese society is primarily determined by assumptions about woman's perceived sexuality and her socially defined role to preserve the honour of her family and kin. Legal subordination to men and economic interpretation of women's agency are grounded in cultural processes of defining the role women are expected to perform in Nepalese society. Such cultural processes in Nepalese society also relegate women to certain sectors of waged labour. The patriarchal notion of conceptualizing womanhood, defining women's cultural obligations, constructing their economic dependency has actually been about female sexuality, but not about the rights of women as citizens. For Nepalese society, women are daughters, sisters, mothers and wives and are a matter of pride and honour of the family until they are under the control of men[2].

According to the latest population census of 2010, 51.5% of the Nepali population are women. But they are still mainly considered second class citizens compared to men. Though an ever growing proportion of women is coming out of the home and finding jobs in the governmental and non-governmental sector, they are not considered competent enough to bear the responsibility of decision-making authority. Mostly they are

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[2] Ibid.

given low level or clerical jobs. The male mentality is still not ready to accept a female boss. So the problem lies there. However, liberalization of divorce and abortion and a growing class of professional single women are some of the social realities that are challenging the traditional Nepali family system and male control over female bodies and sexuality.[3]

Though women comprise more than 50% of the total population, gender discrimination still prevails in society. Gender based discriminations have restricted their access to the state's resources and services like productive services, education facilities, health care services. The status of women in various caste, class and ethnic groups differs from one another in Nepal. Women from certain indigenous groups enjoy relatively more freedom within the private sphere and more access to and control over household resources. Comparatively, Hindu women enjoy more participation and position in the public sphere, whereas women in the Far West and Mid-Western Development Regions are facing extreme poverty and worse form of discriminatory cultural practices. Moreover, the situation of violence against women, systematic and prevalent, is alarming. Social attitudes towards women have resulted in many cases of gender based violence (GBV) in the domestic and public spheres. Wife battering, neglecting and abuse of the girl child, female infanticide, early marriage, dowry related violence, polygamy, rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, human trafficking, forced prostitution, accusation of witchcraft, a number of harmful traditional practices and so on are the major inhuman forms of gender-based violence in Nepal.

Such violence exists due to the absence of women's decision-making powers, under-reporting of violence, and the government's low level of commitment to addressing these issues in general. Considering the whole country, rural and sub-urban areas are much more affected than

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[3] Ibid.

towns and urban areas. In such socio-political and economic circumstances, Asmita Women's Publishing House, Media and Resource Organization (ASMITA), the pioneer feminist organization of Nepal, has been tirelessly working for gender equality and women's empowerment for the last two and half decades.

6.1 Nepali Women Using ICT, Social Media and Citizen Journalism

With the phenomenal global advent of the ICT sector, Nepali women also discovered that using this very human development would be quiet fruitful for them. But, the situation was not in their favour, as they first thought. The very first telecommunication service in the capital valley Kathmandu was started in 1913. The establishment of the Telecommunication Department in 1959 tried to institutionalize the telecommunication sector. Telephones went digital in the mid-eighties[4]. Nepal Telecommunication Corporation (NTC) distributes telephone lines at present while private sector operators are setting up their services – especially in mobile telephony. Radio paging had been available for some time from the private sector. NTC has provided access to telephones in all 75 districts of the country, but there are only a limited number of telephones available in the remoter parts of the districts (see Table 1 below). Most of the services are concentrated in few small towns of the districts. Yet, several joint venture companies have already started working in telephony.

Radio Nepal, for the first time in the country, was established on 1 April 1951 to disseminate government information. More than 80 percent of the population listens to Radio Nepal today[5]. The airwaves have become much competitive with the establishment of scores of FM radio stations nationwide from the private sector, communities and NGOs.

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[4] Nepal Foundation, 2004
[5] Ibid.

Slowly the FMs are growing as a great challenge to Radio Nepal. Similarly, television came rather late to Nepal. The first TV of the country, Nepal Television (NTV), was started as a project in January 1985 and began broadcasting programs from December the same year[6]. After nearly one decade of NTV, more than a dozen private channels some with satellite transmission began their broadcasting services. The computer was first introduced in Nepal in 1971 by the then government for processing data. The private sector began its activities in this area in the early eighties. Mercantile Office System became the first Internet Service Provider (ISP) in mid-July 1994[7]. However, at present, there are more than two dozens ISPs in Nepal, of which one is semi-governmental and the rest are operating privately. The introduction of Information and Communication Technology in Nepal has led to scores of IT institutes, engineering courses in old and new colleges and numerous internet cafes and cyber points – indicating that the ICT sector is booming with immense employment opportunities. Yet, consumer access to these ICT related facilities is still poor.

Table 1

Household Facilities	Family %		
	Nepal	Urban area	Rural area
Radio	50.82	53.56	50.17
Television	36.45	60.67	30.66
Cable	19.33	53.80	11.10
Computer	7.28	23.66	3.37
Internet	3.33	12.11	1.24
Telephone	7.37	22.66	3.72
Mobile phone	64.63	84.07	59.98

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[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.

The above table shows that most of the ICT related facilities are available in the urban areas of the country whereas the rural residents are mostly deprived of these facilities. Ironically, only 17.07% population of the country lives in urban areas.[8]

With the passage of time and the development of the ICT sector, as elsewhere, the use of social media and citizen journalism has also gradually flourished in Nepal, which gained momentum from the capital valley and through those who were studying or residing outside the motherland. A number of people embraced social media for professional as well as personal advancement, and as one of the best ways to reach their audience as well as their relatives and colleagues.

To quote one definition, "If you are doing more than a mere transcription, if you are providing summary, synthesis, analysis or commentary, you are committing a random act of journalism."[9] Maybe this led to the notion that "citizen journalism is a phenomenon to be reckoned with." Actually the term "citizen journalism" has been defined in many ways. The following definition by Bowman & Wills defines citizen journalism as the act of citizens "playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information."[10]

In the context of Nepal, citizen journalism informally came into practice through readers' responses as letters to the editor or comments regarding any news item/features/programs or providing community happenings as news to newspapers, FM radios, television channels and online media[11]. Although some enthusiasts started online media (e-paper, e-magazine etc.) very early, their audience was very low. But

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[8] CBS, 2010
[9] JD Lasica, Citizen Journalism Defined? New Media Musings, June 20, 2007
[10] Women's Net, Citizen Journalism Training Manual, undated
[11] Hamal, 2010

with the rapid growth of social media such as email, blogs, YouTube, face book and twitter, the online media gained significant momentum. Ordinary citizens started to share their views and the latest information through ICTs. For this purpose, the use of mobile phones and email looked to be the most common practice.

With the increase in accessibility and availability of the internet, use of social media is on the rise in Nepal. This has enlarged the professional and personal spheres of individuals. However, it has also created a divide where individuals with internet skills and access can utilize web-based devices and services to enhance their presence in the cyberspace and use it to their personal advancement and professional growth. The divide is actually getting narrower since people are becoming more and more aware of the internet's enormous social, political and economic role in society. It has broadened the reach of the media not only to Nepalese with access to the internet, but also to a global audience including Nepali diasporas which seek news and stories about their society and home.

Though poverty, illiteracy, lack of computer literacy and language barriers are among the factors impeding access to the information and communication technology infrastructure, according to an April 2012 data of Nepal Telecommunications Authority, the internet penetration rate is still 16.67% in Nepal[12]. Of course, a lot of problems remain here. The major problem is that the ICTs being comparatively new, most people do not have the digital or technical knowledge to use the ICT revolution to advantage. In the typical Nepali context, mobile phones are the most common form of social media, as they are used for conversation, sending or receiving information, SMS massages, photos and latest news from the web or e-media. Yet, the small internet user base and even smaller number of content producers does not necessarily diminish

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[12] FNJ, 2012

the reach and importance of the role and use of the internet in Nepal. By its nature, the internet is not limited by geographical boundaries and language barriers. Content generated anywhere in the world is instantly available all over the world, and in Nepal too.

Rapidly evolving online technologies are providing new and user-friendly platforms, tools and service that aid in information dissemination, communication and networking. Along with the prevalence of e-mail, the internet is also becoming the resource and platform for fulfilling the various social roles for individuals such as social and professional networking. While e-mail is used for communicating with individuals or groups based on membership, other social media such as blogs, social networking websites such as Twitter and Facebook, professional networking websites such as LinkedIn, and other websites have a wide following and reach anywhere with internet access. Internet in Nepal is also extensively used for seeking and imparting information.

When one talks about Nepalese women as news makers, media consumers, as experts, as authorities or as people who cannot be ignored, the picture looks extremely bleak. The situation is that women are dramatically under-represented in the news, their points of view are rarely heard, when women do make the news it is primarily as "stars" (celebrities, royalties) or as ordinary people. As newsmakers, women are under-represented in professional categories, and as authorities and expert women barely feature in news stories. Thus, their views are weak in the mainstream media.

Again, there are some serious factors creating obstacles to women using ICTs and social media and being part of citizen journalism. First of all, illiteracy is the main cause. In Nepal, women's literacy rate is only 57.4% whereas the average literacy rate (above 5 years population) is 65.9% and male literacy rate is 75.1%[13]. Additionally, women's eco-

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[13] CBS, B.S. 2069

nomic dependency and low income, limited access to learning new skills including ICTs, and the language barrier are also causing problems for high use of ICTs. Likewise, most of the female population lives in rural areas where ICT facilities are very poor. It would be unreasonable, therefore, to expect large numbers of women to use ICTs and to be part of social media and citizen journalism in Nepal.

Many non-government organizations working for women's empowerment and gender equality in Nepal have their own websites, in which they put information about their organizations, campaigns, advocacy documents etc. e.g. WOREC, Forum for Women and Development, Beyond Beijing Committee, ASMITA, Stri Shakti, Sathi, Sancharika, Working Women Journalists etc. Apart from the website, they widely use FB and e-mails to disseminate the information and for networking. Some women's rights activists widely use Facebook and run their own personal blogs for this purpose. In recent years, some prominent women's rights issues like violence against women (VAW) are being extensively discussed on Facebook. For instance, Fight Against Violence and Harassment of Women in Nepal and National Alliance of Women Human Rights Defenders are some of the sites that are widely using Facebook for different calls and announcements. It is interesting to note that they are getting a good response to such announcements. However, it is not possible to give an example of a widely used and popular online newspaper, magazine or websites dedicated to women's causes in Nepal.

Recently a remarkable application of social media in relation to women's causes was seen in Kathmandu. This practice was largely used in Kathmandu Valley during the time of a campaign in 2012 which became known as "Occupy Baluwatar", a non-planned and unorganized protest that emerged against the broad daylight incident of the rape and robbing of a female worker inside the National airport lounge. The female victim of such a horrendous act had just returned from foreign employment in a Gulf Nation. At that time, hundreds of participants,

activists and journalists and those concerned used mostly Facebook and e-mails for daily programs of protest, and online media for wider coverage and publicity of the event. Women activists were leading the protest rally and sit-in programs just outside the Prime Minister's residence. They used FB and e-mails to share photos, news and information. It all proved to be a very good source of information for many journalists. After 106 days of continued anti-government protest and the sit-in campaign, the government was compelled to back down, the culprits were arrested and suspended from their government jobs, and the victimized woman got compensation. In this way, the significance of social media is recently seen in the movement "Occupy Baluwatar".

Thus, social media usage continues to grow across Nepal, mainly in city and downtown areas, coupled with major shifts in its trends. From merely being used as a tool for social networking and entertainment, social media now infiltrate almost every aspect of the daily lives of thousands of Nepalese, affecting the way they interact socially, do business, or engage in civil society movements.

6.2 ASMITA's Experience of Using Digital Platforms, Citizen Journalism And User-Generated Contents

Though ASMITA started its initial movement with the publication of the monthly magazine "Asmita" advocating for women's rights issues and concerns, it diversified its activities with the newly introduced information and communication technologies, of which production of radio programs, radio jingles, documentaries, cine-clippings for awareness and advocacy for women's rights are some examples. ASMITA also contributed to the promotion of gender-sensitive citizen journalism and user-generated content through its media literacy campaign and news writing training for media consumer women. As an advocacy

organization, ASMITA uses email for its internal communication and information sharing and timely updates its website.

ASMITA did manage to go on air by producing two weekly radio magazine – "Shakti" and "Sama Shanti" – that were broadcast on the 10 most listened to FM radios throughout the country. All lasted for a period of more than four and a half years. Both of the radio magazines were produced in such a way that they addressed almost all the issues of gender equality, women's empowerment and awareness about gender-sensitive communication. Some of the remarkable issues discussed in the programs were women's equal property rights, representation in political processes, formulation and implementation of women's legal rights, justice for conflict-affected women, violence against women, trafficking in women, equal citizenship rights, economic rights, gender sensitive media and so on. Through Radio programs, ASMITA provided a platform to express commitments from state representatives and the views of women's rights activists, ordinary women, experts and survivors. Those radio programs proved very popular and supportive in shaping the demands of the women's rights movement in Nepal.

Similarly, ASMITA also produced a number of radio jingles in and for different ethnic languages on various subjects, i.e. dowry, violence against women (VAW), human trafficking etc. All the jingles were aired and broadcast through various FM radios in the country. ASMITA has also been involved in making documentaries on and about anti-witchcraft, reproductive health of adolescents, situation of the rape victims -both from the State machinery and from the rebels- of the ten year long conflict, documentaries seeking justice for war widows and gender-based violence. All were aired and even telecast not once but time and again from different national television channels. The purpose of making these documentaries was to create awareness among the wider masses and advocate with policy makers as well as with decision-makers.

ASMITA has made use of a digital platform for cinematography too with the production of a cine-clipping entitled "Chetana", based on the huge issue of trafficking of women in Nepal. These cine-clippings were screened nationally in more than 30 movie-theatres for almost six months. This was a great contribution to combat trafficking in women in Nepal.

Likewise, as a part of its gender-friendly media responsibility, ASMITA has been engaged in encouraging local media to be accountable and gender-sensitive. It has carried out a number of awareness programs to promote and increase women journalists from the grassroots level, i.e. from among ordinary media consumer women, who live mainly in the villages or remote rural areas. With the trust and support of the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) and the Embassy of Finland in Nepal, ASMITA launched a media literacy campaign in 14 districts to make aware and active the media consumer women in order to make media content gender-sensitive. Media monitoring and interactions between the media producers and consumers were the main component of the media literacy campaign. Such programs enhanced the understanding of media producers towards weaknesses and biases in their outputs and their responsibility for addressing the expectations of women. Collaboration between civil society and media made all stakeholders accountable to each other. In our experience, advocacy programs should be targeted not only at reporters/correspondents, but also at media owners, executive board members, editors, news chiefs, station managers and others. After the execution of this campaign, local media started to give space and time to the views and experiences of ordinary women and experts.

The media literacy campaign also made consumer women aware of how the media function and consumers' responsibility to make media accountable and gender-sensitive with their active responses. After the program, most participant women accepted that they could learn skills of

analyzing media content and of providing feedback to media. They have started to realize their capacity to change media content which is ultimately a catalyst for social transformation. Local media content was more gender sensitive and balanced due to regular interaction of media producers and media consumer women/ rights activists. After the completion of different phases of that campaign from 2005 to 2010, the participant women media consumers learned and started writing letters to the editor, telephoning correspondents or the responsible person of local newspapers and FM radios, reporting the local news to the local media. Thus, the media literacy campaign proved to be an effective practice of citizen journalism.

ASMITA provides basic-news writing training to ordinary media consumer women for the wider coverage of women's news and integration of gender perspective in all news. This program was designed with two objectives. First, it could make women capable of writing news about their periphery and surroundings left out by mainstream journalists. Second, trainee women could provide news items to the local media, which has severe human resource constraints for presenting fair and balanced coverage of women-related news. In the five-day long training, issues like definition of communication, mass communication, definition of news, types of news, sources of news, news collection, news reporting, news writing, interview skills, gender perspectives in news gathering, codes of conduct regarding news etc. were minutely discussed. Practical exercise, lectures, interactions, role play, experience sharing, group discussions and presentation, distribution of hand outs etc. were the key methods during the training. The trainers made efforts to make the participants more engaged in their exercise work and give feedback on efforts at writing news.

As a result, participants in the news writing training realized their capacity to write simple news around them related to their organizational theme. They also took the forum as a place to gain an introduction to

media owners and editors/radio station managers which might be useful to convey their news through local media. Media consumer women began to send news, poems, opinion articles and letters to media houses[14]. Generally, financial constraints limit most local FM radios as well as other local media working outside the capital valley; phone calls and news dispatches from the ASMITA-trained media consumer women "reporters" were instrumental in achieving wider coverage and promoting user-generated content. Such contributions are encouraging mass media communication to become more responsible, gender sensitive and democratic. This could be taken as a phenomenal instance of citizen journalism, though not in the exact form of digital ICTs. Yet, our media-consumer women widely used the telephone for their "citizen journalism" as well as e-mail.

In this way, ASMITA applied various information and communication technologies and implemented different types of programs including a form of citizen journalism to advocate for gender equality and empowerment in the country.

6.3 Policy Issues Addressed by ASMITA and Achievements

ASMITA – an organization by women, for women and to women – is an integral part of the Nepalese women's movement. The fundamental issue of the women's movement, since the restoration of democracy in 1990, was equal property rights for women. This issue remained in focus for almost eight years not only among women's rights activists, but in a monumental national debate. ASMITA was actively involved in that debate and all the activism around it, purposely publishing special issues of the magazine *ASMITA* strongly pleading why and how women should get their right to property. Alongside interacting with stakeholders, legal

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[14] ASMITA, 2011

experts and grassroots women leaders, ASMITA prepared a booklet which included a number of thought provoking articles, entitled *Equal Rights on Property: One Giant Leap Towards Women's Emancipation.* It also produced and disseminated many radio programs, posters and other information, education and communication (IEC) materials pleading for women's equal property rights. And, after lengthy and deliberate delays, at last the Nepal government was compelled to formulate a Civil Act providing for equal property rights for women. It was a phenomenal achievement for Nepalese women and for ASMITA as well.

Other important issues that ASMITA raised and launched advocacy campaigns for included: the right to abortion (woman should have the rights over her own body), against human trafficking, citizenship for the children of single women, advocacy for gender-sensitive media, women's proper representation in political processes, and against violence against women. ASMITA published a wide range of varied materials regarding the issue of trafficking in women in Nepal, based on a series of investigations in over 28 districts within the country and four major cities of India, i.e. Mumbai, New Delhi, Kolkata and Pune. ASMITA also published awareness posters, aired radio programs and organized dozens of interaction programs with senior journalists and stakeholders. Consequently, the government introduced a new law to curb human trafficking crimes and to sanction the traffickers.

As a result of huge demand, sloganeering and strong advocacy from ASMITA and other women's organizations, the government, for the first time in the history of Nepal, introduced a law against marital rape. Yet the government has to do a lot regarding the issue of violence against women, many more laws and their strict application are needed. It was ASMITA who for the first time in the country raised the issue of the right to abortion, almost a quarter of a century ago. At that time, there was illegal abortion in the market, but without the proper official services and caring, hundreds of Nepali women had to sacrifice their lives

due to unwanted pregnancies or female infanticide. Finally, the 11th amendment of the Civil Act provided Nepali women with right to abortion though with some restrictions and conditions.

During that same period, the government introduced the National Women Commission Act (2007). The commission was urgently required to ensure women's rights in different spheres of the state functionaries. Meanwhile, after the restoration of democracy in 1990, a wave of anti-alcohol activism was seen among the women of extremely remote villages. ASMITA strongly supported them and stood by their side. In one article in the magazine *Asmita* at that time, we said,

> *Feminism evolves everywhere that women are suffering from gender bias, exploitation, repression and violence. Violence against women is a major issue within the feminist movement. Drinking alcohol is directly related with physical violence against women, i.e. battering, rape and molestation or sexual misbehaviour. So, the anti-alcohol activism of the rural women is definitely a part of the feminist movement.*

Ensuring places for women in different political posts and in the official bureaucracy was also a big issue for the Nepali women's movement and ASMITA remained at the forefront of that campaign too. And history was made when the newly elected legislative-parliament passed the law guaranteeing that children may gain citizenship either by the name of their father or mother. Similarly, parliament also passed a commitment for voiding all discriminatory legal provisions and creating a new atmosphere for the eradication of all types of violence against women.

These are some of the significant policy issues raised by ASMITA, as an important stakeholder in the Nepali women's movement, using different media, information and communication technologies. Accordingly, its achievements are also noteworthy.

6.4 Recommendations in Relation to Gender-Sensitive Citizen Journalism

At the time ASMITA started publishing its magazine *Asmita* 25 years ago, printing was all about wooden blocks and letter-press. Then the Mac computer arrived in town and desk-top publishing, cutting and pasting and offset printing came into vogue. These were followed by IBM computers and iMacs and others. Everything went computerized which ultimately led to social media networking and citizen journalism. That's why, in an under-developed country like Nepal, where most of the population is deprived of basic life facilities and modern technologies, there are a lot of things to be done in order to promote information and communication technology among common people.

Together we can make a change and develop an environment in which ordinary people, especially women, can use ICTs and become good citizen journalist and they can go for the advocacy to change policies. Here are some recommendations for the promotion of gender-sensitive citizen journalism:

- Develop infrastructure and programs that support women's ability to create, access and promote information and networking, in particular through the use of new information and communications technologies.
- Organize multi-purpose programs for media owners and decision-makers on the significance of citizen journalism.
- Carry out media literacy campaigns targeting various strata of the people.
- Citizen journalism should report matters like the progress made by women/third gender and their achievements and dignity as well as their success stories.
- Women/third gender should also be presented as creative and advantageous citizens of society, major actors in development processes and a beneficiary group as well.

- Citizen journalism should present positive aspects of the role of women, matters which talk about their academic and professional activities, and matters which show equality between women and men.
- Women, men and third gender should be presented with all of their new roles and images.
- Women/third gender should be presented as sources of information, resource persons and experts in the news, news-based programs and discussion shows.
- Women's opinions, feelings and experiences should be inclusively carried in a balanced way in reporting.
- The issues of women's and third gender's rights along with all the arguments for and against should be brought forward for serious discussion, and such issues should never be taken lightly.
- The presentation of women/third gender and their issues should not be degraded i.e. as sexual objects or as second class citizens.
- Materials which promote vulgarity and present women/third gender as objects of entertainment should not be reported.
- Proverbs, languages, pictures, and cartoons which discriminate, humiliate, or degrade women/third gender should not be used. Always use gender neutral terms and language.
- Women related news should not be manipulated/treated for the interests of political parties.
- Prejudice should be avoided. Citizen journalism should not encourage matters/issues which nurture the notion that members of one particular gender are feeble and powerless whereas members of another gender are strong and empowered.

- Citizen journalism should strongly discourage issues/matters which emphasize traditionally stereotyped roles and obligations of women, men and third gender.
- Violence against women/third gender should be presented as the abuse of fundamental human rights.
- Matters such as rape, human trafficking, domestic violence, sex work, sexual abuse and the like should not be sensationalized.
- Without the proper consent of victims, her/his identity (either by name, picture, and voice or by any other ways) should not be made public.
- If the victim of sexual abuse is a minor, his/her identity should not be made public in any case. The terms of evaluation or comment etc. for such victims should never be used.
- Detailed descriptions that sensationalize an incident and make fun of the victims should be prohibited.

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7

GENDER AND ETHICS IN AN ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

Sonia Randhawa

The following chapter examines how two online platforms, Gender-IT.org and Take Back the Tech!,engage with the issue of ethics and trust with their networks on issues related to feminism and internet technologies.

7.1 GenderIT.org

GenderIT.org emerged from the advocacy work of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) Women's Rights Programme in information and communications technologies (ICTs). Both ICT advocates and policy makers expressed the need to have examples of national policy, gender-sensitive language, tools for lobbying, and an understanding of the impact of poor or positive policy. GenderIT.org works to help fill this gap.

Launched in 2006, GenderIT.org is a seminal resource site that provides feminist reviews and commentaries on internet policies and communication rights issues. It maps the intersections between women's rights – such as violence against women (VAW) and sexual rights – with internet rights issues.

Another objective of GenderIT.org – which is not directly listed but was important from the beginning is where the work is located – really

from the perspective of women in the global south, focusing on margin-alized voices. It aims to bring this perspective in internet governance and internet rights debates.

GenderIT.org runs around 4-6 editions per year, and they are the re-sult of months of research, classifying, interpreting and monitoring ICT policies which affect women around the world, but especially in three regions: Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America. The site also brings together debate, analyses, topical issues and events, and drives discus-sion on issues related to gender and ICT.

In this, GenderIT.org works with a network of contributors based primarily in these regions. Most of these contributors are allies and part-ners of APC's women's rights work with whom the editorial team have developed long-term relationships, based primarily on shared goals. This makes managing these relationships, and any possible conflict, easier, and makes conflict less likely to arise.

The site has three main objectives:

1. To develop an information resource/knowledge sharing site for gender and ICT advocates, civil society organisations and poli-cy makers that wish to be active in gender and ICT policy.

2. To raise awareness among civil society organisations, specifi-cally in women's movements, regarding gender and ICT policy issues.

3. To empower women's organisations and networks in collabora-tion with other civil society actors to take action on ICT policy issues and to develop ICT policy that meets their needs. To en-courage them to lobby for an information society that builds social justice and human rights at the national, regional and global levels.

7.2 Take Back The Tech!

Take Back the Tech! (TBTT) is a collaborative campaign on ICTs and violence against women run by the APC. Like GenderIT.org, Take Back the Tech! focuses on women's rights, feminism and internet technologies.

The campaign calls on all ICT users – especially women and girls – to take control of technology and strategically use any ICT platform at hand (mobile phones, instant messengers, blogs, websites, digital cameras, email, podcasts and more) for activism against gender-based violence.

Each year TBTT accompanies the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence (November 25 – December 10) with daily actions that explore different aspects of violence against women and issues related to internet rights and freedoms. It also encourages creativity and exploration of emerging online spaces and platforms to be appropriated for activism.

In 2005, the APC developed research papers that looked at the connection between ICT and VAW, an issue that received little attention or discussion at that time. From sharing the findings with women's rights and communication rights advocates in different spaces, the researchers found it to be a critical issue that compelled further attention and deeper engagement. TBTT was initiated in 2006 as one of the ways of doing this, and it sets out to:

- Create safe digital spaces that protect everyone's right to participate freely, without harassment or threat to safety.
- Realise women's rights to shape, define, participate, use and share knowledge, information and ICT.
- Address the intersection between communication rights and women's human rights, especially VAW.
- Recognise women's historical and critical participation and contribution to the development of ICT.

The campaign has global individual partners who contribute content and participate in the daily actions, as well as local partners in different parts of the world who organise more comprehensive campaigns as part of their 16 Days of Activism activities. These range from organising safety workshops to talks to street activism, locating the online violence in material and physical realities. The website is the common platform and space to aggregate and support visibility of activities and campaign materials produced by individual and local campaigners and partners.

7.3 Ethics in an Online Environment

While few large media outlets have formal codes of ethics on their websites, there is usually a section on how users can use their content; the codes of conduct for community discussion, including conditions where comments may be removed; and the relationship between the website and the contributors. It is interesting that *The Huffington Post* basically disclaims responsibility for any contributions that they publish: the first point on their agreement is their right to curtail access![1]

In contrast, *The Guardian* has "Community standards and participation guidelines"[2], which are written in easy to understand language, invite feedback and ask users to check back regularly as they are a work in progress. The latter approach is more useful for progressive, small organisations where there is a need to engage the audience in active, participatory ways.

The contrast also indicates the different reasons why an organisation might develop a document of this kind. *The Huffington Post* document is primarily about protecting the organisation against legal liability. *The Guardian* document is about maintaining credibility in an online envi-

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[1] www.huffingtonpost.com/terms.html
[2] www.theguardian.com/community-standards?guni=Article:in%20body%20link

ronment. Among the many charges levelled against websites that allow comments and forums is that they practise censorship. *The Guardian* document safeguards against that charge. It provides the criteria and the limits of speech in their forums, namely that the point of the forums is to further debate, but noting that not all comments do this.

Other codes of conduct or ethics may be related to anonymous comments or sources, funding sources, or the principles by which an organisation stands. The document will reflect the needs and aims of the organisation.

In summary, the reasons behind an online code of ethics or similar document can include:

a) Legal protection
b) Preventing conflict
c) Adjudicating complaints
d) Positioning the organisation
e) Establishing and/ or maintaining credibility

Few organisations integrate a gender perspective when drafting these codes. While *The Guardian* code of conduct implicitly recognises the imbalance of power between the large media organisation and individual contributors, it does not specifically talk about the online imbalance between genders and sexualities. Given that *The Guardian*'s op-ed writers have repeatedly drawn attention to the systemic and prevalent problem of online misogyny[3], it seems to be a particularly conspicuous lapse.

> *If I am recording the interview, I mention this upfront and seek permission from the interviewees to record. I also tell the interviewees the purpose of the interview and assure them that their real names will not be used in any written or digital material that will be developed.*

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[3] www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/apr/06/gender.blogging

> *In the case with a research I did in rural Zimbabwe in 2011, I also assured respondents that I would not mention the name of their village anywhere. I also told them that the only other person who could listen to the recorded interviews was my supervisor.[4]*

7.4 Ethical Considerations for GenderIT.org and TBTT

While the five reasons given above are important to both GenderIT.org and the TBTT campaign, they come second to the responsibility to those the organisations work with and whose voices are heard through the website. Given that many of partners and contributors work with communities and individuals who are marginalised and/ or at risk of harassment from the state and from private individuals, the safety of these groups is a major ethical (and political) concern.

This includes putting emphasis over the potential impact of their work on the personal lives of their partners and contributors. For example, while there is immense value in sharing and re-telling stories of exclusion, harassment and violence, this can at times, result in *triggering responses in some victims and/ or re-traumatising those whose stories are being shared.*

Also, concerns around legal protection extend to partners and collaborators of the organisation. Some jurisdictions where the APC is active in may target, for example, women human rights defenders for criminal or civil prosecution. This means precautions to ensure that communications are secure from the threat of hacking, and that, as far as possible, those that the organisation works with are aware of the vulnerabilities of their communications networks. *The communications network is only as secure as its most vulnerable link*, which could leave some partners or their networks vulnerable.

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[4] GenderIT.org contributor

Thus, the website's opinion on issues such as anonymity is informed not just by concerns about the credibility of the websites and campaigns to the public, but also by the understanding that *anonymity is often a prerequisite to a story being told*.

For example, in the mapping of experiences of violence against women by survivors in the TBTT campaign, anonymity is encouraged. This does not mean that authenticity is not a concern. However, both APC and the organisations that make up the network do not always have the resources to investigate cases or the identity of contributors. Further, the website is open to contributors, particularly the Take Back the Tech! which maps incidents of ICT-related violence against women.

Another key area of difference with the ethical considerations above is the concern with issues related to power. Recognising that radical women's voices, particularly voices from the south and voices from women who face other forms of discrimination, are largely absent from corporate media and their concerns, and *having an explicit agenda of addressing all forms of discrimination affects not only who writes, but also how stories are written*. An example of this relates to the framing of online harassment, which is seen as primarily an issue for privileged, highly visible women, such as journalists and politicians. In contrast, GenderIT.org also looks at how the ubiquity of tools such as mobile phones can lead to harassment and surveillance at all levels of society, and by an array of actors, including family members and private corporations.

Further, GenderIT.org encourages writers to use interview formats, to respect the voices of those that they interview or their informants.

These are concerns that are shared by activist communication groups across the globe. An example is the pioneering feminist media group CIMAC in Mexico. They made a commitment to produce news that

found the women in the news stories. An example on their website[5] is when a strike takes place: traditionally the story focuses on the picket line, rather than on the women who are working to keep food on the table, despite no, or reduced, income.

This commitment is also echoed in the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC)'s gender policy. This encourages stations to look both at the number of women on air or in management of community radio stations, but also at factors that might inhibit women from participating in a station, from the manner in which the equipment is set up to issues of safety, sexual harassment and child-care.

7.5 Ethical Considerations Online

How does the online environment differ from the offline environment?

Hostility towards women is far more commonplace online. In an article addressing the harassment faced by women journalists, Margarita Salas notes that online harassment is a silencing strategy[6]. While women journalists are often more exposed to sexualised harassment, because they are exposed to a broad public, other women, particularly those who venture into traditionally "male" territory, such as gaming, have similar experiences. The case of Anita Sarkeesian[7], targeted for successfully raising money to study tropes in video games, illustrates both of these points – that harassment can target any woman with a public profile; and that *the aim of the harassment is silencing women*.

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[5] www.cipamericas.org/archives/1923

[6] www.genderit.org/feminist-talk/false-paradox-freedom-expression-and-sexist-hate-speech

[7] From Anita Sarkeesian's fund-raising page at Kickstarter, www.kickstarter.com/projects/566429325/tropes-vs-women-in-video-games, accessed 26 December 2012

The internet never forgets. Sometimes the repercussions of having a story published are not apparent immediately, so it is the website's responsibility to try and ensure that all contributors and their sources are aware of possible repercussions of their contributions, and to engage with them on issues of safety and privacy. This is particularly pertinent when working with women human rights defenders (WHRDs). This incorporates the use of images, such as images of training workshops, where participants could be identified and subsequently targeted. Because of these issues, GenderIT.org and TBTT support the use of aliases, as a method to protect vulnerable people.

> *The concern of the possibility of being hacked is always there particularly when one works online. One way of keeping safe is to keep as much as possible material that is sensitive offline. The other mechanism could be to change passwords as often as possible and also not to give out passwords beyond the trusted group of people.*[8]

An example of this in practise is where one contributor, understanding the power of images to relay information, decided to use "cartoon" images of survivors/ victims of domestic violence. Alternatives could include using images that just show the backs or hands of participants, making it difficult to identify them.

Beyond the issue of safety and privacy, images that are posted online may be used, altered or re-posted in different contexts in ways that undermine, humiliate or endanger women. Looking at how initiatives such as AdaCamp[9] handle this is instructive.

> *Another example is that we suggest having a photography policy that gives people a clear visual signal – such as different colored*

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[8] GenderIT.org contributor
[9] http://adainitiative.org/2012/10/freely-available-conference-booklet-template-designed-to-welcome-women/

> *badge lanyards – for whether they want to be photographed.*
> *Photos and videos of women are often taken without consent or*
> *commented on negatively; having control over how their images*
> *are used makes women more comfortable and confident at con-*
> *ferences. Some women don't attend conferences at all that don't*
> *have photography policies.*

To some extent, the websites *have to be guided by contributors on what is safe, acceptable content in the environment in which they live and work*. This is an ongoing process, and involves providing training and expertise on potential risks and strategies for safety and maintaining privacy, including 'downstream' risks - risks posed to others as a result of an activist's increased visibility. In some countries, however, because of the sheer volume of unattributed and often scurrilous material available online, the voices of contributors are only taken seriously if they provide real names and places. Whatever the circumstances, *the safety and privacy of the networks and those they work with are paramount.*

A final concern is the blurring of public and private space for many contributors. While this can be a problem for women journalists, who are attacked in personal spaces (such as Facebook, or Twitter) for public views, this is exacerbated for women who are freelance journalists or contributors. It is thus important that contributors have separate spaces (such as email accounts) for private communications.

7.6 Managing Ethical Dilemmas and Conflicts

7.6.1 Working at a Distance

Working at a distance from contributors, with even the editors based in different continents, can make it difficult to address ethical dilemmas. First, it means that there may be differing interpretations of the particular, local situation. For example, the editorial team work with a blogger

based in Pakistan, who blogs under her real name. Unfortunately, organisations and individuals that APC works with in Pakistan have been the target of threats (including death threats). This has led to serious concerns about safety. Despite these concerns, the blogger is better able to assess the threats that she faces than outsiders are, and the editorial team have to trust her knowledge of the situation.

The organisation takes seriously its responsibility to ensure that international networks are aware of the conditions women human rights defenders face in Pakistan, and ensuring her safety through international scrutiny of the situation. Thus, ultimately, it is her decision to make, but the organisation provides support, training and international solidarity.

There are situations where the editorial team may not defer to the decision made by the local partner – if, for example, other partners in the same country or locality offer conflicting advice. However, it is important to place significant weight on the perspective of the authors themselves.

7.6.2 Verifying Information

Sometimes this can be problematic. One of the most-discussed ethical dilemmas faced on Take Back the Tech! came when a woman wrote her story, and named the man who had violated her rights. The TBTT team were concerned about the ethical and legal complications that might come from this, whether her story could be verified, and whether it would put her at further risk. Initially, they decided to change salient factors of the story, both to protect the victim and to protect the website. The woman felt that this was a further violation, that not only had the perpetrator violated her, but the "feminist sisterhood" was now silencing her. After much discussion, they decided that they had made a mistake, and published her story in its entirety. Since the role in relation to the victim is (a) making her aware of the implications of the publication of

her story and (b) providing support for her voice. There is also the need to verify aspects of the story before being able to publish, and ensure that the space is protected for others.

This has resulted in a ratings system, where each contribution is labelled according to whether or not TBTT has been able to independently verify its contents. They also published a blog post to show why the decision had been made, partly to explain the story, but also so that there was a record of the decision for future reference. This dilemma illustrates first the complexity of the environment – *the need to be supportive of women who have taken the courageous step of sharing their story*. At the same time, ensuring that the space itself is protected.

7.6.3 Working Without Physical Interaction

This emphasises another difficulty: there is no face-to-face communication. Face-to-face contact is often an important way of building trust, of working out differences and building understanding, particularly when contributors and editors come from different cultural contexts. Working out the complications that arise from this is an ongoing process, but some methods used include:

(i.) Working through local partners, with whom long-term relationships are built, thus establishing and maintaining trust in both directions;

(ii.) If in doubt, discuss, preferably with others in either the same country, or the same region;

(iii.) Recognise the various ways in which violations can occur - including violation of a victim's right to their own story; and

(iv.) Admit mistakes and try to be open about the decision-making processes.

7.6.4 Ethical Processes

It is not enough to have ethical outcomes, particularly when working in a human-rights related field. *It is important to ensure that you have "back-end" ethics as well.*

This includes things such as relationships with funders. As the box below shows, this incorporates reporting to the funder, what commitments are made, and what activities are undertaken. It also constrains who GenderIT.org works with, as building a relationship with funders is vital for building trust here.

> *If we receive funding from a donor to carry out training in digital security, particularly from high-risk areas or kinds of work, do we keep a list of participants names and organisations and share with the donor? Do we keep such a list for us as APC? I know that as APC we secure our data as much as possible but even using email to communicate with participants could be risky.*[10]

Secondly, the GenderIT.org team incorporates the belief that access to information is a fundamental human right through a commitment to the open source movement and open access to knowledge. *Restricting access to information has a gendered aspect*, tending to make it more difficult for women to have access to information they need on issues from sexual health to counselling or shelter services. Thus, the website is committed to sharing information. This translates into publishing with a Creative Commons license. It also means that the editors are committed to translating articles as far as possible, with both a Spanish and English edition of GenderIT.org, for example. It also has some articles which are translated into Portuguese and French, when funding allows. Likewise, one of the editorial standards is the use of simple language, not just for ease of translation between languages, but also so that people

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[10] GenderIT.org contributor

who do not speak English or Spanish as a first language find it easy to access the ideas and material.

Thirdly, the use of open source alternatives where possible. Free and open source alternatives are available at low cost, internationally, with ease of translation and modification for particular countries or needs. Thus, for example, TBTT maps are powered by Ushahidi and Gender-IT.org is built on Drupal, a free and open-source content management framework.

> *An important aspect I want to highlight because improves the ethic work that makes GenderIT.org, is concern for the Spanish and Portuguese translation of articles and reports published in the website.*
>
> *In my opinion, accessing to information produced by Gender-IT.org is a fundamental contribution to women in general and Latin America in particular. For this reason I appreciate the effort that I believe should continue.[11]*

7.7 Recommendations

First, it is important to recognise that any ethical procedures or code of ethics are a continuous work in progress. At GenderIT.org and TBTT, ethics is an on-going process, recognising that principles and procedures will vary with context. However there are some underlying principles that are important:

7.7.1 Transparency of Procedures

This is the major principle behind documents such as *The Guardian*'s community standards and any similar code of ethics. It allows read-

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[11] GenderIT.org contributor

ers to know why decisions to remove or alter content are made. The only similar document GenderIT.org has is the editorial guidelines. These encapsulate some of the standards (such as on language) mentioned earlier. The editorial team also try to be transparent in terms of why decisions are made, particularly when there is conflict. This transparency is both with the parties involved and with the audience.

7.7.2 Recognising the Pervasive Nature Of Power Relations

While obviously one of the publication's major concerns is gender relations and the imbalance of power manifest in gender relations, the editors, who are also activists, are also aware that there is often an imbalance of power between editors and contributors, geographic imbalances of power and many others.

7.7.3 Putting the Safety and Privacy of Networks and Contributors First

This means not just those that are dealt with directly, but also those in their networks, on the principle that everyone's safety is as strong as the safety of the weakest computer or device in the network. It also entails making available information on network and individual safety and privacy.

7.7.4 Ethics Is Not Just For the "Front-end"

Ethics extends to how material is made available, the software choices made and who the organisation works with.

Thus, at both GenderIT.org and TBTT, the ethical choices made reflect both where the websites situate themselves in terms of power rela-

tions with their contributors and readers, and how they hope or foresee those relationships shifting.

8

FLYING BROOM'S "LOCAL WOMEN RE-PORTERS' NETWORK"

Selen Doğan & Sevna Somuncuoğlu[1]

In democracies, media are described as the fourth power (after executive, legislative and judicial powers). Media are also the "third sector" (after state and economy). The American sociologist Rivers describes media as "the other government".

It is expected that the media as a significant power use this power also for equality, justice and peace. Yet, the media have become a tool for struggle in women's world, just like in other "disregarded", "weakened" communities. A dangerous tool! This is because women constitute half of the population on a global scale. In this respect the media should not exist by addressing and being nourished by only one half of the population. However, today's media form a structure, in almost every part of the world, in which only men make decisions and media context is male-dominated. The media, with their sexist language and perspective, are far away from representing women.

For this reason, it is a must to develop an alternative to the current media with a gender perspective! For years, Flying Broom has tried to establish this goal with its website, magazine and Local Woman Reporters' Network (LWRN).

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[1] Translated by Eda Özyurt Kılınç & Sanem Akın & Gökşen Görgülü

Why are media important for us women? Because the media:

- Are a means for women's struggle to change/transform their lives.
- Enable us to keep informed about each other.
- Are a means to fight, to draw attention, to make a point, to give emphasis, to remind about responsibilities, to talk about what has been and what has not been done, to create public opinion.

But media:

- Legitimize patriarchal/sexist language.
- Violate women's human rights.
- Create a sexist discourse about women's bodies, despise women.
- Indeed "ignore" women; disregard and annihilate in a symbolical way.
- Profit from exposing women's bodies, commercialize women's bodies.
- Oppose gender equality.
- Expose private life.
- Preach morality.
- Present the victim as guilty.
- Tabloidize violence.
- Normalize inequality.
- Turn women's bodies into goods for entertainment where everybody is watching.

Nevertheless, media can be women-friendly; can be a partner for social transformation by realizing that sexism is men's problem as well; can defend human rights and be a partner for equality and justice-based work; and can play an active role in promoting gender equality.

8.1 Local Woman Reporters Network

Flying Broom Women's Research and Communication Association intended to open up a field for women to create their own media while developing local reporting, when it first established the Local Woman Reporters Network (LWRN) in 2003. Since then, this network has continued its activities and is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year.

The most important characteristic of this network was that it developed an alternative to the often disturbing media with its language, perspective and the value it gives to the news. Within the process, the network not only achieved this function, but also raised media literate women and made important contributions to the "women media" experience in the world.

What was the Local Woman Reporters Network aim?

- To strengthen women's media, promote the production of news from a gender perspective and make women's agendas visible.
- To announce the demands and priorities of local women to the government, local authorities and mainstream media. This way, the "real" agenda of women would be prominent via the news of local woman reporters' network.
- To develop critical media literacy among women of all ages.

What do we intend to do with Local Woman Reporters Network?

- We try to coach news-literate women.
- We want gender sensitive reporting to be widespread.
- We get informed about women's agendas in the provinces.

- We want to make the problems, demands, and successes of women visible.
- We encourage local authorities to develop right and efficient policies for women with our news.
- We expect the local media to give more space to women's news.
- We want local news to be on the agenda of the mainstream media and not just be restricted to the provinces.

Who is the target group of Local Woman Reporters Network?

- Any woman can join this network.
- The only criterion for becoming a Flying Broom reporter is to have a gender perspective.
- Since this network was established to teach women about rights-based journalism, the target group is women of all ages.
- In addition, since the news made by our reporters aims to give a gender perspective to its readers as well, anyone who follows the media is within the target group.

8.2 Reporter Trainings (Gender Based News Workshops)

Gradually, we realized that women reporting for a long time gain experience. On top of that, they direct other women to do reports as well. But another need of extending this news network, especially in big cities, and reading the city agenda with a different point of view appeared. For it to happen, more women needed to take part in the production of news and in a way so that this news network could function for many years.

Flying Broom made an announcement to add new women to its reporters and strengthen its network. In a short while, hundreds of applications were submitted. By October 2013, 603 women had registered in this volunteer news network.

An Analysis

The highest number of local women reporters of Flying Broom (216) is in Ankara. The other cities which have the highest numbers after Ankara are respectively İstanbul (145) and İzmir (55). Alongside these three metropolitan cities, our local reporters in more than 50 cities in Turkey such as Adana, Konya, Mardin, Erzurum, Trabzon, Edirne etc. are watching the local agenda.

We have been receiving applications not only from Turkey but also from other countries. We currently have women reporters from many countries such as the Netherlands, Finland, Malta, Brazil, Poland and Azerbaijan.

One third of the applicants to the local women reporters' network are high school students or university students, one fifth of them are unemployed. There are also academicians, public employees, lawyers, journalists, teachers and psychologists, architects, tourist guides, accountants, bankers and dieticians among our local women reporters. There are even retired women who are not in active working life anymore.

The average age of the reporters that we received application from is 26. The youngest voluntary reporter is 15 years old, as for the oldest, she is 68 years old. Whoever they are whichever occupation they are dealing with and whatever age they are, this shows us that women all need to create their own media.

8.3 Training

With the participation of experts we have been organizing trainings since 2003 to meet the expectations of reporter candidates and to increase their alternative media experience.

During these training sessions (between 2003 and 2013) we conducted workshops on:

- mainstream media analysis with a gender equality perspective;
- news collection and writing techniques;
- media ethics;
- women's movement and media relations;
- feminist media examples;
- importance of local reporting for women;
- the problems of women reporters in areas of conflict;
- empathy;
- reporting issues such as political participation, discrimination, violence, entrepreneurship, etc.;
- sexism in advertisement; and
- reflection of mental illnesses in the media.

In these trainings for the Flying Broom Local Woman Reporters Network, communicators, academicians and reporters acted as trainers and facilitators and sometimes politicians and writers attended as guest lecturers.

8.3.1 Advocacy and Lobbying Studies in Local Woman Reporters Network

- Is it possible to do reports without violating women's rights and reproducing the victimhood of women? For us, yes! The Local Woman Reporters Network has been established to strengthen this possibility and make it tangible.

- Each report written by our reporters in the network draws readers' attention to women's issues. They focus on violence, discrimination, poverty and under-representation while also including the success of women, and the things they are able to do. And of course, the reports brought their demands/expectations to the agenda. Therefore, the network itself became a tool for advocacy.

- In parallel with this work in the network, Flying Broom pointed out consistently and persistently how media violate women's rights. We did that sometimes with press releases and interviews and sometimes with presentations in the national parliament.

- Advocacy does not happen only through critical analysis. We also need to show that the wrong context in the media could be easily reshaped and reproduced with a gender perspective. For that reason, Flying Broom's website has been broadcasting continuously since 2002 and includes "non-sexist news". Reports from Local Woman Reporters Network are published on this website as well.

8.3.2 As for lobbying

- In the 2000s, when we felt the need to extend our target group to spread women's media and women's language, we began a creative action regarding the national parliament: we started to send weekly newsletters to women parliamentarians to inform them of women's agendas throughout the country and in the local areas. These newsletters prepared in the Flying Broom News Centre included information for them to use as a background for their legislation activities.

- With the editors of our news centre and our Local Woman Reporters we visited national media institutions and local authorities. During these visits, we told them about the importance of strengthening women in media and that our news is an alternative source of information for the mainstream media.

- We organized workshops for our reporters in some other cities outside Ankara (like Çanakkale, Mardin). During the organization of these workshops, we held meetings with local women associations in these cities and suggested that alternative women's media should begin there as well. With that, our work on media became more widespread in Turkey.

- Since 2010 we have been publishing Child Brides Almanac every December. We collect child marriage news that has appeared in the mainstream media and show the way these reports are structured and inform reporters about women's problems. These almanacs are sent as soft copy to journalists, parliamentarians and non-governmental organizations.

- Flying Broom chose to broadcast all the radio and TV programmes we prepare on state channels. We see this as part of lobbying. For example in the radio programmes we prepared for two years for the state channel TRT, we touched on issues that were never spoken of before (such as incest, child marriages and domestic violence) and moulded public opinion. We prepared TV spots for TRT on the topic of ethnic discrimination and women. We produced the very first feminist TV shows on TRT channels and we shot and broadcast alternative media shows for local channels nationwide.

- For five years we have been working in coordination with the Local and Regional Televisions Union, which is an umbrella organization for thousands of local radio and TV channels.

We ensure that the shows and spots we prepare are broadcast on local channels. Therefore, we contribute to the spread of gender-sensitive broadcasting.

- Before the last local elections, we published a magazine in which we included the expectations of women from candidates, women friendly city demands and the campaigns of women candidates. The aim of this magazine was to show alternative reporting methods about women candidates and the relation of women and media.

8.4 What Do We Plan For The Future?

We will create a media monitoring team under the name "Red Pencil Media Monitoring Group". Media Monitoring is a new, necessary and effective way of combating discrimination, violation and violence stemming from gender inequality in written, visual, online and social media.

The first example of such an effort in Turkey was MEDİZ (Women's Media Watch Group). This group, formed by women's associations from various cities, organized conferences, published books and held demonstrations to combat sexism in its first years. However, it could not maintain sustainability and MEDİZ lost its effectiveness. There is now a gap in gender-based critical media monitoring and Flying Broom News Centre with its 600 reporters all over the world has the capacity to monitor.

Red Pencil Women's Media Monitoring Group will be established under the roof of Flying Broom to denounce sexist, racist, male-dominant language and perspectives, to develop the alternative media approach and to encourage women to produce news accordingly. This group will also aim at reporting, generating data, organizing trainings and activities besides monitoring and denunciation.

The group summarizes its approach as "pointing to alternatives while uncovering sexism in the media and underlining sex-based discrimination, in other words teaching the right way while criticizing". The group takes its name from the red pencils editors never give up: Critical reading is done by underlining the lines, emphasizing the mistakes, and pointing to the unseen. For that, editors use red pencils. They cross out mistakes with this and write the correct version as well. They note down alternative expressions on the side with red pencils. Red Pencil will monitor the media with a red pencil in hand.

8.5 Local Women Reporters: A Guideline for Gender-Sensitive Reporting

The most important point of Local Women Reporters (LWR) is that women reporters are making alternative news with a gender perspective for media that are blind to the difficulties created by language, limited perspectives and a male-centric approach to the news. Medias are tools for transforming/changing women's life; and they keep us informed about each other.

Using media, we recycle our words and draw attention, make a point, underline, remind about responsibilities, tell what has been done and not done, and shape public opinion

8.5.1 The Relationship between Women and Media

This has increasingly turned out to be a problematic relationship. On the one hand, we all know that media are very important tools for women, but on the other hand we try to understand why they are not women-friendly, why they tend to ensnare women and how to transform them to be the other way around. In this way, we are challenging an enormous system that has a tendency to be on the opposite side. For not leaving

media in the hands of a patriarchal system, we women are *here* in spite of the fact that media ignore us!

We need to come up with alternative ways of reporting because news and its images, montage process, and reporting language are all done while ignoring the perspective of women. Neither the people working in the preparation process of news or the person who has editorial decision-making power may consider preparing news from a gender-sensitive perspective. This is the reason visibility of women in the media is a problem. It is us who will notice and transform it.

8.5.1 Everything is Newsworthy!

Women want to be newsworthy not only when they are murdered in "honour crimes", thrown into the street or when they are defying poverty. They want to be newsworthy for their successes, solidarity, and efforts to reduce problems arising from being women, with their own dreams, expectations and needs. There is a common prejudice that news about women is news about "women's problems". Women should show that this is not the case in alternative news. A few examples will suffice by way of explanation.

We read news about women who made a street demonstration about taking legal measures against marital rape in X city. Sexual crimes are among the most important problems of women all around the world. We can do street interviews with women in our cities about what women are thinking about it, do they know what to do when they experience such things etc. In this way we can see the global problems' impact on the local agenda.

Or there is an immense earthquake in X city. Those rendered homeless are fighting for survival in temporary shelters. In such disasters women are challenged by different difficulties than men. We can make news about hygienic problems in the shelters, women not being able to

obtain medical supplies and the situation of pregnant women. We can tell of the measure to be taken and the needs of women in our news – because Turkey is an earthquake prone country.

Another example might be an official or an actor or a politician who speaks publicly using sexist language and inveighing against women, magnifying discrimination and sexism. What are the thoughts of women in our city? What do they have to say about it?

8.6 Smiling Examples

Suppose that the students of X university put pressure on the university management to include a gender mainstreaming class in the curriculum. They organized a demonstration, collected signatures and expressed the importance of this class to the local media. We need to get their messages and make this action visible by reporting it as news.

Suppose that women living in a neighbourhood of X city organized themselves to look after each other's babies while they are at work. Some of them had participated in meetings of women's organizations and became conscious of their rights. Then they explained what they had learned to other women in their neighbourhood. They also made an effort to raise the awareness of their husbands and fathers who did not support them. As a result, these women were empowered and contributed to behavioural change in their neighbourhood. If we can find such examples, they can be reported as news. Other examples:

- Why do the names of awards in art or literature or sports generally belong to males? Why do people not realize that there are successful women whose names can be used?
- Why do the names of streets, main roads, and parkways generally belong to males? Why are the women whose names are used for streets generally historical characters? (Like Nene Hatun).

- In the city we live in, the heels of the shoes of women generally break on the cobbles of the streets. Since the pavements are so high, women have difficulty walking with baby carriages.
- The railings on bridges and the stairs of busses are not suitable for women wearing skirts. Insufficient street lightning causes an increase in crimes against women. Women feel uncomfortable in the subways where there is little security.
- In general there are no toilets for women in the bazaars or if there are toilets for women, they are poorly maintained.
- Sometimes the location of the bazaars is far away and women cannot afford to go there even by bus. Why are the municipal authorities not aware of these problems?
- How many women know the addresses of public authorities such as governorship, police station, and the social services centre?
- How many women are aware of the hotline for suffering women and children?

8.7 How Will We Reach the News?

The information or document that we are calling alternative news will not fall into our hands in a ready-made format. There are many sources that can be used and keeping in touch with them, collecting information about their activities, consulting them about women issues will make the work easier. You can also benefit from the news and press releases published on many different web sites.

In addition, women's news is not confined solely to women. All vulnerable groups (children, people with disabilities, elderly people, gays, minorities etc.) can be the subject of our news. A gender mainstreaming perspective requires hearing and projecting the voices of groups that are

marginalized or ignored. What is important is that we are making news that takes sides – the side of women and vulnerable groups. But whatever we do, stories must be clear, factual, well-presented and – above all – gender-sensitive.

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