

The Invisible Women:  
Gender and the Kenyan press

by  
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## **Abstract**

In December 2002, Kenya ushered in a new political era after forty years of single-party rule. After the election women achieved record representation in the new Parliament, but remain disadvantaged in almost all spheres of public and private life.

This year, 2005, marked the ten-year anniversary of the Beijing Declaration, a landmark international document for women's rights. My study is particularly focused on one area, women and the media, and uses the Declaration as a framework for examining women in the Kenyan press. I combine various perspectives – the portrayal of women, women as content producers, and the critical analysis of women in the media – for an integrated approach to gender and print news in the country. Content analysis of the two leading dailies is supplemented by a look inside the Kenyan newsroom, through interviews with Kenyan reporters, editors and activists.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS:

AMWIK: Association of Media Women in Kenya

AWC: African Women and Child Feature Service

COVAW: Coalition on Violence against Women

CSW: Commission on the Status of Women

EASJ: East Africa School of Journalism

FEMNET: The African Women's Development and Communication Network

KANU: Kenya African National Union

KIMC: Kenya Institute of Mass Communication

NARC: National Rainbow Coalition

PFA: Platform for Action

WRAP: Women's Rights Awareness Programme

## INTRODUCTION

Women's issues are usually not the stuff of which headlines are made. Nor are gender-related concerns considered good copy. When such questions do draw the attention of the media, they are often either sensationalised, trivialised, or otherwise distorted. In a nutshell, their coverage can be summed up as a series of hits and misses.

- Ammu Joseph and Kalpana Sharma (Joseph and Sharma, 7)

In October 2002, I traveled to Kenya for the first time on an internship with the Mazingira Institute, a small Kenyan non-governmental organization that dealt with housing and the environment. I arrived at an interesting time, as the country was gearing up for historic elections in December 2002. I remember distinctly the sense of euphoria that seemed to have consumed the entire country; change was in the air. After forty years of one-party rule, the Kenya African National Union (KANU) and its leader, President Daniel arap Moi, were about to fall. And fall they did, with opposition candidate Mwai Kibaki, head of the newly-formed National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), ascending to Parliament in a landslide victory. The "Rainbow Revolution" promised a glorious new dawn.

But the euphoria didn't last. One of NARC's key election promises was a new Constitution within 100 days of coming into power. By the spring of 2005, the Constitution was over 700 days late, and other changes have been equally slow. An editorial in the *East African Standard* on February 19, 2005 summed up the new mood in the country:

Two years ago, Kenyans were said to be the most hopeful people in the world. That was hardly surprising. They had a new government that promised them a new way of life and most certainly, it was also a sort of self-congratulation at having bundled KANU out of power after 40 years.

If the latest opinion poll is anything to go by, that hope has evaporated. In its place is an acute sense of disillusionment. What is it borne of? It emanates from the fact that the new leadership they were promised has proved to be nothing but a repeat of the old. The many promises that the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) made at election time are yet to be fulfilled. Safe (sic) for the free primary education, the success of which has been varied, all the other promises still remain unmet. And of course, there is the nettlesome question of corruption” (*Government can still redeem itself*, Standard, Feb, 19, 2005).

Coming back to Canada for graduate school in September 2003, I continued to feel distinctly connected to this African country in mid-transition, and returned to conduct interviews in spring 2004. But progress toward democratic change seemed to be slowing, as I was completing this project over the course of the summer of 2005; Kenyans were no longer tolerant of the delay in constitutional change. Violent protests rocked the capital Nairobi, the coastal city of Mombasa and Kisumu in western Kenya ahead of the July 21 vote on the latest constitutional draft.

Although it might not be the revolution expected by some, the NARC period *has* meant changes in many areas of Kenyan life, including for underprivileged groups such as women and children. The Government introduced free primary education for all, and there are now more women in Parliament than ever before. Also, with fewer press restrictions than in the KANU period, national and regional media continue to expand at a rapid pace. Despite the changes and opening up of civil society, many women in the country can still neither read, nor afford a daily paper. Nevertheless, it is important to determine how women are faring in the country’s national press. This year is a particularly apt moment for media monitoring of women’s issues. Although monitoring

women's progress in the press is not new, 2005 marks an important benchmark in the international movement for women's equality.

### **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**

The year 2005 was a turning point for the international women's movement. Ten years earlier, the landmark Beijing Platform for Action was drafted. This year, the United Nations marks 30 years of efforts for gender equality, since the first UN World Conference on Women was held in Mexico in 1975. Twenty years later, the Fourth World Conference was held in Beijing, China. It was the largest UN conference ever held, with delegates from 189 countries and 2,600 non-governmental organizations participating. In the build-up to the meeting, there was a flurry of research activity on a variety of women's issues, which in turn led to a flood of new publications. At the conference, UN member states adopted a political Declaration and Platform for Action, committing their governments to take measures to advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PFA) is an agenda for women's empowerment that aims to remove the main obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making.

The PFA was a watershed moment for international women's equality. Not only did it lead to new research and discussion, but a decade later, the document is still the standard used by the UN and other international, as well as national, groups to champion women's rights.

Earlier this year in New York, the ten-year anniversary of the Beijing Declaration was celebrated. While it wasn't a fifth world conference per se, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) met for its 49th session from February 28 to March 11, 2005. The event, dubbed "Beijing+10," consisted of a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration. After three weeks of discussions on countless topics related to women's progress all over the world, the result was not a new international document, but rather, an official re-affirmation of the 1995 platform. This move reinforced the idea that even ten years after publication, the PFA is still considered the best and most complete document for women's advocacy.

The PFA identifies 12 critical areas of concern to achieve gender equality. In particular, the platform has this to say on the subject of women and the media. Section J reads:

*Strategic objective J.1. Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication.*

*Strategic objective J.2. Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media.*

In general, the media have great potential to promote the advancement and equality of women. The Beijing Declaration noted that mass media are a powerful means of informing and educating people, and can be an instrument to aid governmental and non-governmental institutions in the advancement of women, and for development. In particular, the media can help raise awareness about the causes and effects of violence against women and stimulate public debate on the topic. Further, the Declaration affirmed

it the “responsibility” of the media to promote non-stereotyped images of women and men, and to eliminate patterns of media presentation that generate violence. Also, those responsible for media content are encouraged to establish professional guidelines and codes of conduct, including gender policies.

### **The Beijing Platform for Action and Kenya**

Kenya is currently in an historic transition phase with the new political era being ushered in. This has resulted in an unprecedented democratic space for all, including the press and numerous civil society organizations concerned with women’s rights. The new government enacted the *Gender Commission Act* and established a National Commission on Gender to “mainstream gender issues in all aspects of public life” (Agenda Item 12, unpaginated). The Platform for Action, with its diverse strategic objectives, has a similar goal – it too seeks to mainstream gender issues in all aspects of public (and in some sections private) life.

The goal of this research project is to use the PFA as a lens through which to evaluate the Kenyan press. As a journalism student, I am particularly focused on Section J – Women and the Media. Kenya enjoys “a more diverse media scene than many other African countries” (BBC, web) and is a leader in the regional media landscape, exporting news products to neighbouring countries.

Nancy Worthington has written several articles on aspects of gender and the Kenyan press. Her work is exceptional because it is the only widely-published academic research on gender and news with a specific focus on Kenya. However, her studies tend

to focus not on general news coverage, but on one major news event or person. In order to determine if gender issues are ‘mainstreamed,’ we need to investigate the news product churned out on a day-to-day basis. Thus, Worthington’s event-specific research, while informative, does not shed light on the news mainstreaming of gender concerns. A wider scope is needed to present a snapshot of gender and Kenyan news.

Given the opening up of civil society with the new government in power, the time is right to examine what impact a widening democratic space has had on women’s representation in the news. In conjunction with the tenth anniversary of the Beijing Platform, the following analysis will use the PFA as a starting point to examine the Kenyan press.

Ten years after Beijing, how is Kenya doing with regard to Section J? Does the Kenyan press promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women? And further, does the Kenyan press contribute to the advancement of gender equality and women’s rights? In order to answer these questions, and in the media monitoring spirit of the Beijing Platform, I conducted a content analysis of the two largest dailies in the country, the *Daily Nation* and the *East African Standard*. This analysis was supplemented with personal interviews conducted with local media professionals, scholars, and non-governmental experts.

The answer, in short, is a resounding NO. In fact, Kenyan women are virtually invisible in their national print media. **Kenyan women are absent from the press in three important ways – in readership, in content, and in the newsroom where that content is produced.**

Pamella Makotsi-Sittoni, Managing Editor of *East African Standard*, says that according to market research conducted for the paper, people who buy the newspaper are mainly men (approximately 80 per cent). She says it is often said in the newsroom – “If you cover that woman, how do you think she’s going to get the money to buy the paper? She won’t buy the paper, she doesn’t read the paper, why should you have her there?” (Makotsi-Sittoni, June 4, 2004).

The problems Kenyan women face with regard to representation in the media are mirrored elsewhere on the continent. Edem Djokotoe, a media training manager in South Africa writes:

Over the years I have come to realize that:

- Any attempt to mainstream gender in reporting must acknowledge that the media is traditionally conservative and as a result, resist change;
- The general impression people have is that gender is synonymous with women, and that when a column or a page is created to deal with gender, people expect it to focus on women’s issues that will be read only by women, nothing more;
- In the African press, attempts to mainstream gender in editorial coverage have been restricted to by-lined columns;
- Because the media in Africa were born out of political experience, their coverage is essentially political;
- Men who write about gender are treated with suspicion and often accused by other men of having “sold out” to the women’s movement;
- Mainstreaming gender in editorial coverage must be a management decision that has the full-backing of the gatekeepers in the newsroom;
- Gender is not an editorial priority and is considered a donor-inspired fad which will soon disappear (quoted in Lowe Morna, 9).

Djokotoe touches on a number of issues that will be addressed in the following chapters: African media are steadfastly focused on politics and resistant to change; gender as a concept is misunderstood; and mainstreaming gender must become an editorial priority.

To address these and other related issues, the analysis that follows is organized in four chapters. The first is a literature review with an introduction to news as discourse, the nature of African news discourse and a discussion of how this discourse excludes women. Chapter 2 presents the Kenyan context, including a background on the Kenyan press and the status of women in Kenya. Chapter 3 includes a discussion of the methodology, results and analysis of my content analysis. Chapter 4 looks inside the Kenyan newsroom, in discussions with Kenyan reporters, editors and activists. In the conclusion, I return to the original question of whether or not a political change has also meant a change in the portrayal of women in the Kenyan press.

The intention of this work is to ask and answer questions by combining various perspectives throughout its chapters – the portrayal of women, women as content producers, and the critical analysis of women in the media – for an integrated approach to gender and Kenyan print news.

## CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

In Beijing in 1995, for the first time in the history of women's conferences at the United Nations, 'the media' were included as a separate area of study, the result of years of concern that women lacked access to, and were underrepresented in, the world's mainstream media (Pandian, 459). This chapter will examine this critique of the media, starting with some of the patterns of news creation that lead to news being a "male genre." This critique will then be examined in the Kenyan context with a review of the existing literature on gender and the Kenyan press.

The media have long been at the centre of feminist critiques (Van Zoonen: 1994, 11). As early as 1963, Betty Frieden, leading feminist and author of the groundbreaking book *The Feminine Mystique*, "privileged the mass media as an indicator and site of struggle over gender politics" (Valdivia, 8). With feminists becoming more and more concerned with media representation of women, a significant body of feminist media scholarship emerged. Feminist analysis of the news media, as one communications scholar writes, "does more than add women to the analysis, it changes its focus, it raises different questions, and identifies different issues for discussion" (Manson, 26). Indeed, over forty years after the feminist content analyses of the mass media emerged, the issues they raised have been picked up by many others (including scholars and activists) from different countries and backgrounds. Leela Rao writes, "Feminist insights have made gender and media a universal issue of debate" (Rao, 45).

International concern with women's representation in the mass media began in earnest in the 1970s. In 1975, the first world conference on the status of women was convened in Mexico City to coincide with International Women's Year, which aimed to remind the international community that discrimination against women was a persistent problem. The conference, along with the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985)<sup>1</sup>, "launched a new era in global efforts to promote the advancement of women by opening a worldwide dialogue on gender equality" (Choike, web).

With the Mexico City conference began an international monitoring process in the many fields that touched women's lives, one that would involve deliberation, negotiation, setting objectives, identifying obstacles and reviewing the progress made. One particular area of concern was the portrayal and participation of women in the mass media. The 1975 U.N. Conference and the subsequent declaration of the 1980s as the women's decade were two of several catalysts in the emergence of feminist media scholarship; also important was the 1980 release of the landmark UNESCO publication *Many Voices, One World*.

With the publication of its final report in 1980, the UNESCO report proposed a "new world order" in the field of communications. Among many other topics in communications, the UNESCO report examined the role the media can play in remedying persistent gender inequalities. MacBride et al. write:

Of course, the media are not the fundamental cause of the subordinate status of women, nor can it be remedied by the media alone. The causes are deeply rooted in social, economic and political structures, as well as in culturally determined attitudes, and solutions must be found in far-reaching changes. *However, it is within the power of the media to either*

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<sup>1</sup> The women's decade was proclaimed by the U.N. General Assembly five months later at the urging of the Conference.

*stimulate or to retard change to a significant degree* (Italics mine, MacBride, 191).

The UNESCO authors expand on the subject of media power in the field of gender equality. “In both developed and developing countries, public attitudes regarding the role of women in society are determinants in deciding the status of women. In shaping these attitudes, the media exert a strong influence” (MacBride, 190).

The “media,” although often misrepresented as a single unified force, actually represent a vast and varied field that includes everything from soap operas to soap commercials to news stories of the latest soap that might cause cancer. This study is particularly interested in the news media, itself a wide spectrum of print, broadcast and new media organizations.

Hannah Pandian – summarizing the feminist critique of the news media – writes, “Some maintain that any improvement in women’s treatment in news will require not simply more coverage of women’s news or more women journalists but a fundamental change in news as a narrative form” (Pandian, 475). Here Pandian recognizes that modern news reporting and its product maintain a very distinctive shape. What is the ‘news narrative form’?

### **News as discourse**

Teun A. Van Dijk posits that news is a type of discourse. Discourse constitutes a social practice, governed by an agreed upon set of conventions. Van Dijk writes, “One of the most obvious properties of media news, ignored or neglected both in traditional and more recent approaches to media reporting, is that news reports, whether in print or on

TV, constitute a particular type of discourse” (Van Dijk, 1). The chosen discourse, whether in texts or talk, delivers the vocabulary, expressions and perhaps also the style needed to communicate. News comes to the reader as a pre-existing discourse, an ordered system of codes and conventions that the ‘news-literate’ have adjusted to (Hartley, 5). Discourse analysis, Van Dijk writes, “emphasizes the obvious, but as yet not fully explored fact that media messages are specific types of text and talk” (Van Dijk web). “A discourse is not a static, idealized, or totalized unity of words and significances, but a dynamic field of interests, engagements, tensions, conflicts, and contradictions” (Grodin and Kreisworth, web). This field reflects the power structures of society and its institutions. Thus, in order to show how underlying meanings are related to the text, an analysis of the social, political, and cultural context is necessary. Or as Hartley puts it more simply, “In discourses, language-systems and social conditions meet” (Hartley, 6).

Getting back to the news text itself, according to Van Dijk, the study of news reports in the press is one of the major tasks of discourse-analytical media research. This attention, he writes, is justified because of the major role news plays in everyday life. Discourse analysts are primarily concerned with meaning – what is this text about, what does it mean, and what implications does it have for readers?

Van Dijk dissects the news story: news reports, he writes, follow a hierarchical schema, consisting of such conventional categories as the Headline, Lead (together forming the Summary), Main Events, Context, History (together forming the Background category), Verbal Reactions, and Comments (Van Dijk, web). A definitive feature of news reporting is the use of the headline and/or lead to express, in a highly concise form, the crux of the news event and to orient the reader to process the text in a pre-determined

direction. This means that a reader can glance at the headline or lead and obtain a fairly accurate idea of what the whole report is about. This ‘fronting’, or bringing to the top (even in sentence structure) is a general structural property of news reports in the press (Van Dijk, 11). In a type of discourse where space is always at a premium, news headlines have to be crafted in such a way as to use the minimum number of words to contain maximum information. Thus, every word in a headline is carefully chosen and structured so as to maximize the effect of the headline. Analysing newspaper headlines as well as the captions of photographs (similar word constraints as headlines) would allow the researcher a glimpse into the underlying meaning behind newspaper reporting. Van Dijk calls this “relevance structuring” the practice of putting the most important information first (Van Dijk, 11).

The organization of the schematic superstructure of the news report varies, depending on the news organization (which may be more or less concerned with providing background). Thus, two newspapers can report on the same event in two completely different ways. That is because different news organizations may operate using different ‘news values.’

The well-known news values that embody the professional beliefs and attitudes of newsmakers about the newsworthiness of events are practical, common sense evaluation criteria, which allow strategic attention allocation to, and selection of, sources and source texts, summarization, choice of perspectives, and finally the topic and style structure of news reports (Van Dijk, 27).

Of the multitude of events and actions that take place on any given day, only a very small number ever make it to the printing press to later land on the public’s doorstep. Journalists and their editors determine which events, and what aspects of the chosen events, make the news (or are “newsworthy”). These choices are made using a

predetermined set of ‘news values,’ which, according to Stuart Hall, are “unstated and unstatable criteria of the *significant*.” (quoted in Saunders, 276) Although communications authors may sometimes disagree on the details, a fairly inclusive list of news values, compiled by Melvin Mencher, suggests the following:

- timeliness: Events that are immediate, recent;
- impact, consequence or importance: Events that are likely to affect many people;
- prominence of the people involved: Events involving well-known people or institutions;
- proximity to readers: Events that are geographically or emotionally close to people interest them;
- conflict: “Strife, antagonism, warfare have provided the basis of stories since early peoples drew pictures on their cave walls of their confrontations with the beasts that surrounded them”;
- the unusual nature of the event: Events that deviate sharply from the expected, that depart considerably from the experience of everyday life make news;
- currency – the sudden interest people have in an ongoing situation: Occasionally, a situation long simmering will suddenly emerge as the subject of discussion and attention; and
- necessity – a situation the journalist feels compelled to reveal: The journalist has discovered something she feels it is necessary to disclose (Mencher, 64).

Lastly, not included in Mencher’s list of news values (but implied in ‘conflict’) is the value toward negative news. These nine news values do not exist in a vacuum. Even if an event has one (or preferably, several) of these news values, it may still not make the

nightly news or tomorrow's front page. As Mencher writes, the application of news values depends on those who are deciding the news, where the event and the news organization are located, the tradition of the newspaper, its audience, and a "host of other factors" (Mencher, 77). The people involved in making the news have to fit their activities into a complex social network that includes other institutions, such as the state, their competitors, and the people on whose activities they actually report (Hartley, 9). Van Dijk writes that news values are derived from the complex interplay of social representations – culture, ethnic or gender group, nationality, political ideology – along with information that is specific to the medium – readers, deadlines, and actual goals (Van Dijk, 27).

Because of time and staffing limitations, budget, and the sheer volume of potential news items, journalists can't decide from scratch every day how to select the fraction of the day's events that will appear in the news; they must make a routine of their task in order to make it more manageable (Gans, 78). Saunders writes, "Journalists need to bring to the task of event detection a series of framing procedures capable of imposing order and coherence on the social world" (Saunders, 277).

Todd Gitlin defines the 'news frame' as "persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual" (Gitlin, 7). Depending on the news frame at play, particular topics and voices are included, while others are not. Worthington writes, "Frames are the focus, a parameter or boundary for discussing a particular event. Frames focus on what will be discussed, how it will be discussed, and above all, how it will not be discussed" (Worthington: 2001, 4). According to Gitlin, a

story represents a choice, a way of seeing an event, which also screens out certain elements from the reader's sight. In order for it to be possible to screen so many events on a given day and produce more news every day, in a continuous stream, the news frame must remain more or less consistent, or 'routine.' Sigal writes, "Social location and reportorial routine have a lot to do with who gets caught in the news net" (Sigal, 17).

According to media theorist Herbert J. Gans, 'ordinary' people appear in the news relatively infrequently, although the frequency rises if they are caught up in official proceedings (such as going to court). Gans, in his classic study *Deciding What's News*, differentiates between sources he calls 'knowns' (i.e. known to the public, occupying official positions such as politician or high-level bureaucrat) and those that are 'unknowns' (regular people who appear in the news because they are victims, for example) (Gans, 9-15). Gans found that knowns, as 'authoritative sources', made the news far more often than unknowns (Sigal, 12). The corollary, of course, is that the economically and politically powerful are much more likely to be 'knowns' and thus to make, and shape, the news (Gans, 81). News, Gans writes, is primarily about people, and that "who's" are news is a matter of journalistic convention. Newspapers, Sigal writes, feature the same names repeatedly reacting to events of the day. As another journalistic convention, identifiable individuals stand for groups, institutions, and values (Sigal, 14).

This pattern of only allowing certain (powerful) voices to be heard excludes many people from the news loop. Saunders asks, "How then, one must ask, can those who speak from marginalized social locations establish their voice in the news and their status as authoritative, newsworthy subjects?" (Saunders, 279) Gans, writing in 1979, noted that although most of the people who appear in the news continued to be men, women had

become “the latest newsworthy minority” (Gans, 28). However, as was the case with the civil rights movement before them, certain women continued to be excluded (most notably, working-class women). The focus was primarily on women entering politics and the professions, or the leaders of the organized women’s movement (who were generally white and middle class). However, as Tuchman notes, politicians and female professional “firsts” (the first woman to head a co-ed university, for example) saw themselves as exceptional individuals and did not necessarily speak for other women, nor did they represent the movement in general (Tuchman, 140). Tuchman used the term ‘symbolic annihilation,’ to describe the under-representation of women (and their views) in the mass media, and the trivializing of women’s issues.

### **Women in/and news discourse**

The issues highlighted by the women’s movement, like those of any other social movement, are necessarily subjected to the frame of the conventional news narrative (Tuchman, 154). But the work that the movement was most focused on did not mesh with reporters’ and editors’ ideas of ‘news’: “The tempo of newswork... mandates an emphasis on events, not issues” (Tuchman, 134). In extraordinary cases, the women’s movement was able to drum up significant coverage – for example, the *New York Times* gave significant space to the 1975 Mexico City women’s conference on both the general news and women’s pages (Tuchman, 148). But, Tuchman notes, in such a case reporters could rely on standard methods of covering conventions (just replace leading man said ... with leading woman said ...) Events such as conventions are discrete, with an easily identifiable beginning, a middle and an end; progressive social change does not have

identifiable time constraints – thus, an ongoing phenomenon such as sexism can be dismissed as unnewsworthy (Tuchman, 134). Hard (event-based) news is always considered more important and more newsworthy than soft news. Pervasive and perpetual social ills such as homelessness, and uncared for street children, fall under the soft news category.

As Gitlin and others have argued, in order to become news, an occurrence or issue must come within a reporter's or an organization's purview; in other words, it must be part of the pre-existing news frame. Tuchman argues that the public definition of the women's movement as "something peculiar" was shared by male editors who reinforced that view by being selectively blind toward women (Tuchman, 138). The news frame, Tuchman writes, is inherently male-dominated and male-oriented. "That is, the professional ideology to which "newsmen" subscribe identifies male concerns as the important news stories, and accordingly, relegates topics traditionally characterized as "female" to a peripheral status as news" (Tuchman, 138).

Feminist scholars argue that mainstream news media, relying on their professional practices, maintain gender hierarchy as a hegemonic structure. Worthington writes:

News frames depict both the product and the process of hegemony in that they reflect how journalists naturalize constructions of reality, including gender hierarchy, using routines and practices developed over time to accommodate working conditions, journalistic traditions, and news values (Worthington: 2003, unpaginated).

Although they may disagree about the causes, many scholars agree that media portrayal of women and women's issues remains less than ideal. Hannah Pandian asserts that recent research has shown little improvement in the quantity or quality of news and other information about women in the world's media (Pandian, 461). Prevailing news

values still define (most) women and their problems as ‘unnewsworthy.’ When women are included, their portrayal is “predictably sexual or confined to the private sphere of the home” (Pandian, 461). Leading feminist scholar Margaret Gallagher writes:

Media treatment of women can best be described as narrow... underlying practically all media images of women – though characterized somewhat differently from one country to another – is a dichotomous motif which defines women as either perfectly good or wholly evil, mother or whore, virgin or call-girl, even traditional or modern (quoted in Ndung’u, 10).

Gallagher argues that women’s representation in the media helps to keep them in a place of relative powerlessness. In the early 1980s she found “depressing similarities” between western industrialized, eastern communist, and southern developing countries: Women are underrepresented in the media, in production as well as in content (Van Zoonen: 1998, 17). According to Gallagher, documents such as the Beijing Platform are not enough. In 2001, she wrote:

More than twenty-five years after the international community began formally to recognize the scale of gender inequality in every aspect of life, and despite the adoption of many measures to redress gender imbalances, the power to define public and media agendas is still a male privilege (Gallagher: 2001, 3).

Gallagher argues that the fundamental patterns of media representation that preoccupied the women’s movement in the 1970s remain intact. According to feminist critics, media content projects women as objects rather than subjects.<sup>2</sup> Gallagher created a checklist to help define and investigate what she calls “the overall patterns of gender representation in the media.” The list, which she adapted from Michielsens’, notes the following patterns to watch for:

- Women appearing in stories in only a limited number of subject areas;

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<sup>2</sup> Although ‘objectification’ of women is often associated with advertising and entertainment rather than news, cross-over does occur. In particular, in the Kenyan case, we see an over-emphasis on beauty pageants (where women are seen but not heard) in the news media (see Ndung’u, Higiuro, Alubbe).

- Women speaking (or not);
- Traditional gender roles enforced;
- Stereotypes including the “superwoman” stereotype for independent women and the “natural” stereotype for women in the home, sex-object stereotypes<sup>3</sup> and the beauty myth;
- Normalization of violence against women;
- Lack of diversity of women and men interviewed (diversity in race, social class, age etc.) (Gallagher: 2001, 120)

In her research, Gallagher found that women, and their voices, are considered “unworthy” of serious consideration even in media content that is specifically targeted for them (for example, in Tanzanian stories about village midwifery, local women were not interviewed). On the other hand, issues that are central to women’s lives (such as motherhood) come low down on the scale of what is defined as newsworthy. In 1981, Gallagher found that no country with available data reported that more than 20 per cent of their news was about women, and in most cases the figures were much lower (Gallagher: 1981, 77). At best, women become ‘news’ in coverage around a particular event such as International Women’s Day. This is in keeping with Tuchman’s finding that covering conventions is easy, because reporters can follow the male patterns of newsgathering (Tuchman, 142).<sup>4</sup> However, as Walsh found in her study of ten women’s

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<sup>3</sup> The issue of stereotypes was raised at a regional conference on women and the media organized for Anglophone Africa in Cape Town (June 1998) by the London-based World Association for Christian Communication. There, media activists placed considerable importance on eliminating media stereotypes and most sexual images of women. The most common issue raised in Cape Town was the sexualization of women’s images in the media.

<sup>4</sup> The International Women’s Tribune Centre was not impressed with the coverage given by mainstream media to women’s conferences, “Why, when women organize, are our efforts seen as inane, ridiculous, nonsensical?” They quote the following newspaper headlines. On the 1975 World Conference:

“Feminists fight at meeting” (Daily Telegraph, Australia, 17 June 1975)

“Feminists scream insults at meeting” (Canberra Times, Australia, 30 June 1975)

“Mum’s the word as the big yak yak begins” (Sydney Morning Herald, Australia, 30 June 1975)

for the 1980 Decade for Women Conference:

“Conference women scuffle with police” (New York Times, 19 July 1980)

“UN women’s meeting snarled in politics” (Christian Science Monitor, 1 August 1980)

“A discordant conclusion for women’s conference” (New York Times, 1 August 1980)

IWTC, 6

magazines and their coverage of the Beijing conference, even the women's media don't always report on women's conferences (quoted in Price-Rankin, 18).

The point most frequently made by authors about women's images in the media is that "there just are not enough of them" (Pandian, 461). When UNESCO sponsored the Global Media Monitoring Project in 1995 to explore the representation of women in 71 countries, it found that women made up just 17 per cent of all interviewees in the news worldwide. Further, women interviewees were much more likely to be lay voices, even on topics that were specifically focused on women; male interviewees were more typically considered voices of authority; and 29 per cent of all female interviewees were portrayed as victims of crime or accidents, compared with just 10 per cent of male interviewees. A follow-up worldwide study in 2000 found similar results (i.e. no significant change in media representation of women over the years, with a jump of only one percentage point to 18 per cent women as sources), and these figures were relatively consistent across regions. Leela Rao's report on the findings from the data compiled in India for the Global Media Monitoring project in February 2000, states:

In general, the media treatment of stories continues to be straitjacketed. When there is a success story, the suffering/exploitation are not highlighted, when women are victims, their struggles/strengths are not projected; newsmakers were mostly politicians and male; the more local the media, the less reference to women (Rao, 46).

The international media monitoring projects also found a noticeable split in news coverage between urban and rural concerns, the latter receiving comparatively little attention. In one Kenyan study, rural women featured in only a tiny fraction of news coverage, when they did appear, a striking 76 per cent of rural women were portrayed as criminals or victims (Deane et al., 87).

### **Women in the newsroom**

It has been argued that few women are interviewed in the news because few women are present in newsrooms to do the interviewing. Since the 1970s, women have gained access to countless fields and made progress in almost every domain. Still, in newsrooms across the world, women represent the minority in staffing.<sup>5</sup> How does this fact get reflected in the news produced? The question is a hotly debated topic in feminist circles.

It was and is often said that the minority position of women in journalism affects the quality of the news product, be it the press or television. Because the news is made by men, it is thought to reflect the interests and values of men too, and therefore news cannot serve very well the needs of this famous other fifty percent of the population, namely women (Van Zoonen: 1998, 34).

The premise that more women in the newsroom will lead to a better gender balance in the news product is the basis of Section J of the Beijing Declaration. This premise is accepted by some authors (Gallagher, Worthington) and refuted by others (Van Zoonen). Van Dijk suggested that a group's position (such as a male group) shared by journalists will reflect their cognitive representations (Van Dijk, 27). Nevertheless, whether or not one agrees that more women in the newsroom will necessarily lead to changes in the way women are represented within media products, employment remains a rights issue. Women have as much a right to be employed in, and rise to the top in the media as in any other field. Thus, this paper takes the position that increasing the percentage of women in media organizations is an important objective in and of itself.

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<sup>5</sup> The *Global Media Monitoring Project 2000* found that women make up 56 per cent of the world's tv presenters, but only 28 per cent of radio reporters and 26 per cent of newspaper reporters (Gender Links, 24).

In her research on women and the media, Van Zoonen found a “widespread assumption” among female journalists and feminist scholars that the news would change “into new directions more relevant to women if only there were more female journalists.” She challenges this assumption, arguing that research shows the profession is organized in such a manner that different individuals will work the same way, whether they are men or women (Van Zoonen: 1994, 34). Van Zoonen concludes that the gender of journalists is relatively unimportant for the way the news looks.

Van Zoonen, in analyzing the term “gender,” maintains that in order for media output to change as a result of women’s presence in the newsroom (or in the profession in general), one must be convinced that female communicators share a certain perspective, approach, preference or style that distinguishes them collectively from their male colleagues:

In other words, one must assume ‘femininity,’ however defined, as a feature of female journalists and ‘masculinity’ as that of male journalists.... Gender should not be seen as a fixed property of individuals but as part of a continuing process by which subjects ‘work’ on a sense of self... If we conceive gender as such, we shall not expect that female communicators will have enough in common to produce a radically different type of media output (Van Zoonen: 1994, 63).

American researchers Liebler and Smith would agree. They write, “News media exclusion and stereotyping of women have been widely documented, and the question remains whether increasing the number of women reporters will eliminate these tendencies” (Liebler and Smith, 58). In their content analysis of U.S. broadcast media, Liebler and Smith found:

[F]ew differences between women and men correspondents in their choice and treatment of male and female sources. Male sources were used more often than female sources and were more likely to be shown in

professional capacity, regardless of the reporter or gender or policy issue covered. Results confirmed that gender-biased reporting still exists, and that women report the news no differently than their male counterparts (Liebler and Smith, 58).

The key factor in the look and feel of the news product is thus not whether or not the producer is a woman, but that she is a journalist maintaining a certain news frame. But, as Gallagher writes, “In the end, the crucial question is not who is telling the story but how the story is told” (Gallagher: 2001, 8).

On determining the gender dimensions of how “the story” is being told in the press, Gallagher argues that quantitative analysis “can yield only a very limited understanding of gender portrayal in media content.” In order to grasp the complexity and subtlety of media messages, it is necessary to dig more deeply to reveal the nuances of gender representation (Gallagher, 123).

Like Tuchman, feminist scholar Alison Young argues that many conventions of press “entextualization” (such as the narrative form of articles themselves) are oriented to male perspectives. Only an “over-reading” – Young’s term for critical analysis – will expose the “desires and fears” beneath the press narratives. This analysis, in turn, will yield a more adequate understanding of media accounts (Pandian, 1028).

Qualitative analysis helps to uncover the connections between meaning and social, political, and cultural context. Young found a link between news content and institutions outside the media organization. Similarly, African news discourse after 1990 is very much a product of decades of state repression. Coming out from under government control has meant a new expansion for African media, but also for many, a legacy of news values that places politics first (at the expense of all other issues).

## **African news discourse**

Before turning to women's representation in African news media, it is useful to first examine some of the social conditions that underlie the news discourse in Africa. One of the key issues of the post-colonial press on the continent is press freedom – or more commonly, the lack thereof under various oppressive regimes. It is a fundamental principle of a free society, and the essence of press freedom, that news organizations determine their own agenda (International Council, 7). Ojo defines press freedom as the right or ability of news practitioners to express their views, opinions or report events as they are without seeking approval from any other person, and without being subjected to intimidation, persecution or harassment (Ojo, 825). Hirst writes, “The test of any society is equal access to educational opportunity, and access to the facts that affect our lives, and the rights of free press, free speech and free assembly, underlie this process” (Hirst, 24). It is telling to note that no country with a free press ever suffered from famine (Hirst, 24). Unfortunately, just as famine has ravaged several countries in Africa, so too have serious impediments to press freedom.

As Ojo notes, there is no political system in the world with unfettered press freedom, but advanced democracies come close (Ojo, 827). In Nigeria, although the Constitution protects press freedom, the media have to contend with the *Official Secrets Act 1962* and other laws such as those of defamation, libel and sedition. In South Africa under apartheid, until the Soweto student uprising in 1976, the State concentrated its control on media organizations. Thereafter, the focus shifted to include individual journalists perceived to be writing anti-government stories. The next decade saw moves

toward registration of journalists, newspapers and news agencies. Many sources of news (largely protest groups) were banned outright. Journalists were tried and sentenced to fines and, more often, jail terms for media-related violations (Tomaselli and Louw, 77). Media clampdowns remained in effect right up until the end of 1989. A harsh media climate affected different news organizations differently -- throughout three states of emergency, the white press continued to self-censor. They incorporated themselves into the regime's 'total strategy' by consistently taking a conservative approach. The black 'alternative' media, on the other hand, continued to grow and multiply despite the State's increasingly draconian attempts to intimidate journalists and their employers. In 1988, a co-editor of the *Weekly Mail* said to his peers:

We have to show up the notion that we are an alternative and therefore fringe and unimportant... we represent the views much closer to the majority in this country than the so-called mainstream press... it is they who are becoming fringe, not us (Harber statement).

The South African example illustrates a pattern that often recurred elsewhere on the continent -- the competing discourses of state media vs. alternative media. State media would self-censor, and print little or nothing that the government in power would find problematic. Meanwhile, the government used the media to portray itself as legitimate, and to persuade the public that what it defines as the 'public interest' is correct (Ojo, 829). As Ojo notes, the government would often argue that media censorship was necessary in the nation-building process.

Meanwhile, alternative media had to contend with a powerful state and unfriendly press environment. This, while still trying to educate the public on state affairs,

disseminate information on the government's activities and expose wrongdoing (including corruption), all in order to ensure accountability and transparency (Ojo, 822).

In the 1990s, the entire continent seemed to be opening up to media and democracy. In fact, the two go hand in hand: The media are among the forces that have shaped and defined the establishment of democracy in Africa (Ojo, 822). Tettey writes, "Since the early 1990s, the Ghanaian media landscape has witnessed significant changes, just as is the case in much of the African continent" (Tettey: 2003, 83). Adu Boahen writes that in Ghana prior to 1992, the lack of freedom of the press led to a "culture of silence" wherein a tight control of information was the norm (Boahen: 1992, 56). In 1992, the Ghanaian constitution was being deliberated on, and press freedom was not considered to be just about the rights of the media operators themselves. The committee's views on the media's role in democracy were succinct. Afari-Gyan writes, "[I]n a developing country, it is necessary for the media to report on issues of development, to carry out general education of the public, and to pass on certain information from the government to the people" (Afari-Gyan: 1995, 70). It was unilaterally decided to entrench press freedom explicitly in the constitution.

Freedom for the press in Ghana is a relatively new initiative. Since independence, there have been few limits to the sanctions that Ghana's authoritarian governments have placed on journalists, editors and proprietors of newspapers. These include for the people involved: harassment, fines, detention and even imprisonment. For the newspapers themselves: censorship, seizures, physical destruction of whole editions and outright banning (Boateng: 1996. 183). In July 2001, Parliament repealed the criminal libel and sedition laws designed to interfere with press and media. Ghana is the only country in

West Africa that has repealed the criminal libel law. These laws had for years had a ‘chilling’ effect on the press.

### **Women in/and African news discourse**

The wave of democratization that swept through Africa in the early nineties had profound effect on the media on the continent. Without a doubt, one of the great victories of the last decade in Southern Africa has been the return in almost all countries of the region to pluralist politics, and an unfettering of the media (with the notable exception of Zimbabwe). Edem Djokotoe, a media-training manager from South Africa writes, that “Because the media in Africa were born out of political experience, their coverage is essentially political” (quoted in Lowe Morna, 9). With a political news discourse comes a very specific set of potential news items and news actors, including, for example, the president, members of Parliament, etc.

As a result of a definition of news that revolves almost exclusively around politics, there is a noticeable lack of hard news on other issues, including women’s issues. Further, because women make up only a small percentage of those involved in the political sphere, their voices are rarely heard. Nancy Worthington, writing on Kenya but echoing Margaret Gallagher’s findings, argues that media representations are part of a larger symbolic system that establishes and reinforces power relations based on categories, including gender. She writes that Kenyan news media perpetuate a gender classification system by framing content according to a public / private distinction, one that associates men with the public sphere of politics and paid labour, and that links

women primarily with the domestic labour of the private, family sphere (Worthington: 1995, 67). In Africa, this effect is magnified by the gender disparity in the paid workforce.<sup>6</sup>

The *Gender in Media Handbook* produced by Gender Links invites the reader to consider that African women produce 80 per cent of the continent's food, account for most of its transport, trade more goods than official statistics even begin to suggest, and sustain families through devastating droughts and conflicts (Gender Links, 33). And yet, available data indicate that media coverage in Africa continues to serve the interests of a small elite and effectively excludes the voices of women, children, and even the majority of men (Lopi, 1). The lack of women's voices and perspectives on issues of politics and economics, as well as many other development issues, gives the impression that women in the region have no opinions on, nor are they affected by these issues.

In the African media, like elsewhere, gender reporting is regularly confused with writing about women and women's issues only (Lopi, 1). Women's pages and supplements have often been hailed as a means of ensuring coverage of women and women's issues in the mainstream media. However, as the Gender Links authors argue, these "women's spaces" are little more than "women's ghettos," where women's issues that should be part of the mainstream public debate, can be conveniently dumped (Gender Links, 31).

In addition to acts of omission, the African mass media have for decades been accused of acts of commission regarding women's unfair representation in the press.

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<sup>6</sup> Women's share of income in Southern Africa is much lower than that of men, ranging from 22 per cent in Mauritius to 45 per cent in Tanzania. Women constitute between five and 20 per cent of managers. The majority of Southern African women are either unemployed, work in the informal sector, or are subsistence farmers (Gender Links, 22).

Worthington, one of the leading academics on gender and the Kenyan press, has found that the country's media follow the international pattern of under-representation, trivialization and stereotyping of women. She concludes, on the whole, that African news like other news worldwide can be considered a male genre (Worthington, 169).

Glaze Shuster conducted media research in a number of sub-Saharan countries including Uganda, Zambia and Tanzania. From 1971 to 1974, she analysed Zambian newspapers and found 'intense ambivalence' toward women, who were portrayed as "immoral, tough, unsentimental, materialistic, and cunning," and often characterized as either devils or folk heroes (Karega and Masinde, 14). In the mid-1980s, Cameroonian journalist Abema Nlomo also found two contrasting treatments of women in local television – either as a dedicated, "hard-working" mother or as unfaithful prostitutes (Ndung'u, 9). Ojo, looking at Uganda in 1980, found contradictions in the media portrayal of women. She concluded that women there "found themselves scapegoats not only for male confusion and conflict over what the contemporary roles of women should be but for the dilemmas produced by adjusting to rapid social change." (quoted in Gallagher: 1981, 60), As a result, there was evidence of a certain backlash against professional women. Unmarried women running for political office were stigmatized by the media for their single state, and thus, were forced to produce boyfriends or fiancés in order to 'qualify' as suitable political candidates (Pandian, 462). Also in Uganda, a study conducted by Linda Nassanga Gorette in 1974 found women were given coverage mainly in relation to a man – as wife, sister, daughter, mother etc., rarely on their own merit (Karega and Masinde, 15). Gorette writes that in this sense, the media are simply mirrors

reflecting society, wherein women are only considered of worth when on the arm of a man.

African women are as invisible in the news, or more so, as their western counterparts. In 1994, the Uganda Media Women's Association found that women were the focus of only 16 per cent of news coverage, and this coverage dealt with a select few urban women who were in influential positions (the First Lady, ministers and managers,) those Gans would call the 'knowns,' (Pandian, 462). Interestingly, in Kenya, even female politicians are excluded from coverage:

The press, it seems, has a clause in the book of rules which states that no woman should be featured on the front page and, especially not on the headline or main story unless in extreme circumstances... When Kenneth Matiba, Raila Odinga, Mwai Kibaki or Kijana Wamalwa issue statements, they are splashed on the front pages, but not Ngilu, Maria Nzomo or other women at the forefront of articulating positive change (Ng'ang'a unpaginated).

### **The case of Kenya**

Very little critical analysis on the portrayal of women in the news media has been conducted in Kenya (Karega and Masinde, 15). According to Worthington, their mainstream media representation appears to fit the pattern of female symbolic annihilation (Worthington: 2003, 2).

Nancy Worthington analysed press representation of prominent environmentalist Wangari Maathai<sup>7</sup> during her 1989-1990 protest against the ruling party's plans to

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<sup>7</sup> Maathai is well known to Kenyans as the region's first female PhD and a vocal advocate of women's rights, including a former posting as the chair of the National Council of Women of Kenya. Later, she was elected to parliament when the opposition swept to power in 2002 and was appointed to the post of deputy

construct a 60-story skyscraper in a Nairobi park. During the first two months of the controversy, the *Weekly Review*'s representations of Maathai seemed to defy the gendered nature of news narrative, with stories framed largely in the environmentalist's own rhetoric, which linked environmental preservation to nationalism. Later the frame shifted, with news stories focused more narrowly on Maathai as a female and a Kikuyu - member of the majority tribe in the country, but one other than the leadership of the country at the time (Worthington: 2003, 11). The material shifted from Maathai's achievements to her forceful personality. Elements of her divorce case were mentioned in stories, a sort of personal detail the magazine had earlier criticized parliamentarians for mentioning. In the later stage, few of her words were directly quoted, as they had been earlier. Worthington describes the second period of coverage:

In a complete reversal from the first phase of coverage, the magazine mixed paraphrases and quotes from President Moi, as he invoked gender as an apparently obvious rationale for outrage at Maathai's behaviour. He blasted Maathai for 'going too far' and wondered why other women in the country had not come out to 'discipline her' for showing no respect for men as required by African traditions. By drawing on the authority of tradition, Moi's statement invoked gender discourses suggesting that women who engaged in political advocacy did so at their peril (Worthington: 2003, 12).

The coverage of Maathai in the first phase was unusual. Worthington attributes the challenge to gender hierarchy to a temporary alliance that served both the interests of female advocacy and the media organization's needs. Maathai's focus on nationalism and class conflict allowed the magazine to engage "in an act of ventriloquism," to criticize the government in a brief moment when state hegemony was weakened. After a threatening presidential speech, where it became clear that opposition would not be tolerated, the

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environment minister a year later. In 2004, she became the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

“magazine retreated to framing based on the well-worn gender and ethnic discourse offered up by Moi” (Worthington: 2003, 15).

Worthington examined another example of female protest against the Kenyan state. In 1992, a few hundred Kikuyu women traveled to Nairobi to protest their sons’ incarceration. After a hunger strike, police moved in, beating many of the women and their supporters. Three mothers responded with a traditional Kikuyu female protest in which mature women strip to ward off additional violence, and curse the perpetrators (Worthington: 2001, 168). The *Review*’s reports rarely named the mothers, and they were often linked to known ‘subversives’.

Coverage of ‘combative motherhood’ seemed to have the potential to challenge the “prevailing international pattern of women’s symbolic annihilation by news because the mode of advocacy draws on the way women’s identity as mothers confers on them moral authority that can be mobilized for social change” (Worthington: 2001, 180). Yet, according to Worthington, the *Weekly Review*’s coverage severed the link between motherhood and political legitimacy; as a result, the protesting mothers were portrayed as combative women or political dupes. This is another example of reporting within the male news frame that shows women as ill-equipped for the political arena (women’s presence in politics is treated as ‘unusual’). Once again, the person with the most authority in the country – President Moi – largely shaped the news frame. Moi suggested that the mothers were incompetent and misled by others whose motives were subversive. In an ironical twist, the women were actually successful – their sons were released from prison, and the “Mothers of Freedom Corner” are now folk heroes, oft-repeated examples of the power of civil disobedience.

The press' concern with government approval was also a key factor in a notorious Kenyan case. Susan F. Hirsch analysed local and international coverage of the "night of madness," where in mid-July 1991, male students at St. Kizito, a Kenyan boarding school, raped more than 70 female students and caused the deaths of 19 others who suffocated in the crowded dormitory where the attacks took place. The incident received extensive media coverage inside and outside the country. Hirsch reports that the rapes at St. Kizito were described by some Kenyan journalists as manifestations of the sexism "rampant in contemporary Kenyan society" (Hirsch, 1025). And yet, in almost all of the initial reports, the boys involved were distanced from responsibility for the violent acts; in fact, both boys and girls were virtually absent as "acting subjects or embodied victims" (Hirsch, 1034). For example, reporters would refer to "the rapes" or "the attacks," as opposed to "the older boys raped younger girls." In reporting the story in such a detached fashion, the press were at first actively involved in local and national political management of the incident, trying to get the tragedy "under control." Later, the focus shifted to the state of the education system that would lead boys to go so wild. A *Daily Nation* editorial about St. Kizito implicated the Kenyan education system as ultimately at fault in causing the stressful environment that led to the attack (Hirsch, 1039). Editorials gradually shifted from critiquing the education system to scrutiny of the Kenyan state as a whole. The *Daily Nation* even had a noted psychologist make a connection between authoritarian rule and violent school uprisings. In this way, St. Kizito was yet another instance of Kenyan journalists carefully negotiating the political landscape after over a decade of severe restrictions on criticism of one-party rule (and the party's leader-President Daniel arap Moi). As in the Maathai protest, oppositional journalists embedded

their critique of the party's role in social and political problems in discussions of seemingly unrelated issues. Education was a frequent topic through which the *Daily Nation* and other papers covertly attacked government authority and competence (Hirsch, 1041).

Hirsch notes an exception in the St. Kizito coverage. An independent news magazine, the *Weekly Review*, was particularly bold in emphasizing the gender implications of the event at the boarding school. In a front-page editorial, editor in chief Hilary Ng'weno wrote,

[T]here is more to the St. Kizito incident than a mere breakdown in discipline in our schools. More graphically than any other event in recent years, this tragedy has underscored the abominable male chauvinism that dominates Kenyan social life (quoted in Hirsch, 1041).

This editorial contrasted sharply with other voices appearing at the time in the local press. Ng'weno even went so far as to accuse his contemporaries: "those so adept at fulminating against the ills of society are generally silent about gender issues in this country" (Hirsch, 1041).<sup>8</sup> In the following weeks, the magazine launched what Hirsch refers to as "a broad media discourse on Kenyan women's status," across a vast spectrum of topics that involved rural and urban women and paid special attention to class and ethnicity. Three weeks later, the *Weekly Review* followed up with a cover story entitled "Sexism in Kenya," and other articles within the same issue explored rape, women's subordination in law, education, and the economy, and the efforts of women's groups working for gender equality.

St. Kizito was a catalyst not only for the media, but for Kenyan society at large as well. The tragedy became a reference point for women's participation in a broad-based

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<sup>8</sup> It is interesting to note that this came only one year after the same news magazine had manipulated the Maathai coverage for political ends.

movement to elect female candidates in the country's first multiparty elections (December 1992). At the same time, an extensive review of the state's education system was prompted, specifically with regard to girls' substandard performance.

Another news analysis of the *Daily Nation*, also done by Nancy Worthington, suggests Kenya's most widely circulated newspaper represents women narrowly as symbols of gender and class categories, often in ways that are consistent with women's role in national development. Worthington examined 1992 coverage of Kenyatta Day<sup>9</sup> celebrations produced in a special pull-out section. She focused on articles within the special section, which were devoted exclusively to depicting the place of women in contemporary Kenyan society. The pieces relied on Kenyan women as news sources, which contrasted with previous research that women in the country are more likely to be seen than heard in the press (Worthington: 1995, 69). These stories focused on Kenyan women engaged in the public-sphere activities of wage labour and political participation. She found that "in apparent contradiction to the pervasive image of the 'evil' urban woman, some women are portrayed as contributors to economic development and partakers of the rewards of modern, capitalist Kenya" (Worthington: 1995, 72). There was a definitive class element to the coverage; in sharp contrast, she found that poor women were often depicted as "signs of the time." Lastly, she found women commenting explicitly on gender inequity, and attributing that inequity to causes that could be remedied. She called these a "rarity in the Kenyan press" (Worthington, 1995: 76).

In the absence of unusual circumstances, the Kenyan media appear to follow the worldwide pattern of women's symbolic annihilation within the prevailing male-oriented

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<sup>9</sup> Kenyatta Day is a national holiday, named after the country's first president. It is meant as a tribute to the freedom movement, and as a chance for Kenyans to reflect on their past.

news frame. In recent years, four master's student research reports on various aspects of gender and the Kenyan press have been published by the University of Nairobi's School of Journalism. David Ndung'u examined the portrayal of women in the *Daily Nation's Saturday* magazine. According to Ndung'u, portraits of women or girls, all photographed by men, dominated *Saturday's* covers. "However, there [sic] mode of description or introduction leaves a lot to be desired. They are either 'Our beauty ...' or 'Our cover girl/model...'" (Ndung'u, 23). Despite a large number of women present in both photos and stories, a "paltry" four to five per cent highlighted women in what Ndung'u sees as a positive light – as heroines or public figures. A lion's share is taken up by relationship advice or advertising. It should be noted that although the *Saturday* magazine comes with the daily paper, its focus is decidedly not news. The main topics, Ndung'u writes, are "dressing, domestic affairs, marriages, hair styles and general decorum, relationships, women and love" (Ndung'u, 24).

Simon P. A. Alubbe, another University of Nairobi student, performed a simple counting exercise to determine the quantity and nature of news coverage given to women's issues in Kenya's three leading daily newspapers. Alubbe found the total coverage given to women's issues in the month in question (June 2002) to be quite low, 3.7, 4.3, and 3.6 per cent for the *Daily Nation*, *East African Standard* and the *People* newspapers respectively, (Alubbe, 18). In both the *Daily Nation* and the *East African Standard*, women in sports<sup>10</sup> were the most widely covered, followed by women as role models/celebrities in the *Nation*, and women as agenda setters in the *Standard*. Alubbe notes that these two papers "focus on articles that highlight women's successes and

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<sup>10</sup> Although a lot of coverage was dedicated to women in sports, most of this was of foreign sports celebrities such the Williams sisters and Martina Navratilova in tennis and Marion Jones in sprinting.

influence” (Alubbe, 18). This is both encouraging and discouraging, encouraging in that the content is quite positive, discouraging in that there was so little of it. Conversely, the *People* seemed to highlight stories that showed women in subservient roles: women were either weak, taken advantage of sexually, physically abused, or admired solely because of their beauty. All three dailies had rape and sexual harassment in the top five issues most covered, while affirmative action was virtually ignored. Interestingly, Alubbe found that most of the stories involving violence against women were cases of domestic violence. In the entire month, there were only two front-page lead stories involving women, one on Charity Ngilu and the other on Beth Mugo, both Members of Parliament (Alubbe, 19). The author notes that, at the time, the percentage of women in Parliament was 3.5 percent, almost the same figure as the amount of coverage women’s issues received in the press.

Another student, Joy Higirot, looked at the pictorial portrayal of women on page one of the *Nation* and the *Standard*. Before starting the study, she noted that women very rarely make it to the front page, and when they do, they are seen as “dependent and unequal to men” (Higirot, 7). She writes that most of the pictures of women in the print media in Kenya are of models, street children, the elderly, or beauty pageant contestants. Also, those that “get a chance” to have their pictures in the paper are those who live in urban areas, which excludes different minority groups and most significantly, all rural women (Higirot, 6). Higirot chose the front-page photo because it is the most prominent space in the paper, but also because even non-buyers can easily see the front-page pictures. She argues that negative or positive portrayal of women on this page has the potential for great influence, even among non-readers and presumably, the illiterate as

well (Higiro, 8). Overall, Higiro found very few front-page photos of women. Although there were more in the *Standard* (40/180 in six months) than the *Nation* (8/180 in six months), the highest number in a single month was nine (or 30 per cent) for the *Standard* (Higiro, 29). Analysis of the pictures found women portrayed as criminals, weak individuals or symbols of beauty. In the April 2002 editions of the *Standard*, photos included a woman accused of stealing heroin, a woman arrested after participating in a strike, a woman sobbing at a High Court judge's funeral and Miss Tourism 2002 contestants (Higiro, 30). Further, women portrayed in a positive light (the first female Maasai chief Neima Kimojino) were allotted a smaller sized photo than those in a negative light (Mombasa mayor Masoud Mwachima crying after her husband was arrested for corruption). The Mombasa mayor also fit the pattern of an inordinate number of photos showing women weeping. Fifty per cent of the front-page photos in the *Nation* during the study period showed women looking sad, in the *Standard*, 12 per cent of women were seen in a "sad and hopeless situation" (Higiro, 33). Higiro also looked at the number of pictures taken by female photojournalists; there were no female photojournalists at the *Nation* (which has 11 on staff), while the *Standard* had women in three of 15 such positions. Higiro argues the lack of female photojournalists at the *Nation* was a "key factor behind the newspaper's dismal coverage of women," and that newsrooms need to recruit more women as photographers in order to achieve more balanced visual coverage of women (Higiro, 34).

The pattern of women's representation found by Higiro on the front page of the Kenyan dailies matches a global pattern. In December 2001, Kelly B. Price-Rankin conducted a global study of front-screen images of men and women in 750 online

newspapers in 74 nations. Worldwide, almost 70 per cent of the images published on the front screen were of males, only three online newspapers photographed women more often than men. Lastly, only two online newspapers accomplished gender equality by showing men and women each 50 per cent of the time (Price-Rankin, 39). There were nineteen online editions of newspapers that did not show women at all in their photographs, of which Kenya's *Daily Nation* was part.

Moving beyond the simple counting, Muthoni Karega and Mary Masinde, also at the University of Nairobi, looked at language and gender bias in the Kenyan print media. They write, "The way articles are written can either maintain women's oppression and subordination or be instrumental in bringing about much needed positive change" (Karega and Masinde, 2). Karega and Masinde were interested in sources, specifically whether or not they were named, and the use of gendered pronouns. "Calling a person by name repeatedly will not only leave an impression on the listener/reader's mind but it will also bestow authority on the character named" (Karega and Masinde, 21). It is their contention that through the use of nouns and pronouns, the print media builds images of personalities they deem important, while downplaying those of people they "do not wish to promote" (Karega and Masinde, 21). Prominent people are referred to by name, and often; and men are accorded privileged named positions. The premise is that the higher their status, the more a source's name would be repeated before the writer dropped the name and started using gendered pronouns.

"Conversely, it was found that the players whose identity and status were not deemed 'crucial' or important enough enjoyed less naming and that their names were quickly dropped for gendered pronouns or role-based identification e.g. guest of honour, mother of two, widow, women's leader, Kanu activist etc" (Karega and Masinde, 28).

During the week covered by their study in 1997, out of a total of 1191 subjects named, only 280 (19 per cent) were women (Karega and Masinde, 29). The study was conducted during a crucial period of constitutional talks in the country. Nevertheless, the authors found women “conspicuously invisible in the clamor for change” (Karega and Masinde, 30). Even presidential candidate Charity Ngilu did not appear in headlines, or subheads. When she did appear in the national news (in the *Standard*), it was not on a policy issue. Women were invisible from politics, but did appear in other news categories. Stories on healthcare (in particular child health and immunization) were prominent. In one story in the *Standard*, it was noted that the manager of the Kenya Expanded Programme on Immunization was a woman doctor, however, in the story she shared space with a visiting male doctor who was named twice (while she was named only once). Women were also found in stories on crime (including frequently in rape and defilement), as models and in sports. They also featured in agriculture stories but not as professionals. This, Karega and Masinde note, is in contrast to reality, where women manage many agricultural production holdings, especially family and small-scale enterprises.

Recall that news discourse only has meaning in relation to other institutions. The Kenyan state is currently undergoing an opening up. Nancy Worthington attributes gradual changes toward more gender-sensitive discourse to “expansive hegemony,” whereby the media are part of a larger hegemonic system that can absorb small challenges (Worthington: 2003, 14). Kenya is in an historic transition phase. After the opposition came to power in December 2002, a new political era was ushered in. This has resulted in an unprecedented democratic space for all, including the press and numerous

civil society organizations concerned with women's rights.

## **CHAPTER 2: THE KENYAN CONTEXT**

### **Introduction**

Chris Ogboudah, writing on democracy on the African continent, says that the political changes that took place in the 1990s enabled the media to “play a more active role in shaping the democratization process in African countries” (Ogboudah, 77). In many African cases, as in Kenya, the 1990s marked the beginning of multi-party politics and democratization after decades of one-party or dictatorial rule. In fact, 42 African countries have held multi-party presidential and/or parliamentary elections in the last 10 years (Kibaki statement). Still, Ogboudah notes, in most countries the political transition has some distance left to cover; progress has come in fragments rather than system-wide reforms. Many media outlets are still constrained by fear of state persecution. Kenya fits Ogboudah’s pattern perfectly: almost three years after their election, the changes achieved by President Mwai Kibaki’s new government are few and far between.

Ogboudah emphasizes the importance of constitutions, and media protections therein, as an important component of freedom of expression. Kenya is currently in a state of legal flux. After the opposition gained power in December 2002 (marking the end of 40 years of single-party rule), a new constitution was drafted – one that contains many more freedoms than the original constitution, including an oft-touted Bill of Rights. Although the draft was produced in March 2004, it remains mired in political controversy, and it has yet to be entrenched. Nevertheless, the changing political landscape means controls on the media are shifting.

## **The Kenyan press**

Kenya's original constitution does not explicitly guarantee press freedom; rather the media operate under 'right to freedom of expression' under Section 79. However, the government since independence has routinely ignored this protection and broadly interpreted several laws, including the *Official Secrets Act*, the penal code and criminal libel laws to restrict the press. In recent years, senior politicians and other public figures have brought defamation charges against a number of media outlets and publishers, winning exorbitant sums. Journalists, meanwhile, have been jailed on similar charges (Freedom House, web).

Despite tenuous legal standing, since independence, Kenya has experienced a relatively high degree of pluralism in its print media. Three of the country's four dailies are privately owned, while the current opposition party Kenya African National Union (KANU) continues to own the *Kenya Times*. A large middle class now provides a base for substantial advertising revenue in the urban areas (BBC, web). The country has a tradition of a relatively independent press, although newspapers often had to practice self-censorship during the era of Presidents Kenyatta and Moi. The print media are dominated by two major publishing houses, the *Nation* and *Standard*, both of which also have substantial broadcasting operations. Today, the two leading papers both appear daily in tabloid format and cost 35 Kshs (just over \$ 0.56 Canadian).

East Africa's oldest newspaper was founded by Alibhony M. Jeevanjee, an immigrant from India, in 1902. The *African Standard* was later bought by British settlers E.B. Abderson and R.F. Mayer, and renamed the *East African Standard* in 1905. This second *Standard* was heavily political and geared toward white settlers. After

independence, the paper shifted hands from the British conglomerate Lonrho International and is now owned by local businesspeople under the name Baraza Limited (Higiro, 2). The paper now enjoys a circulation of around 60,000, although actual readership is closer to 1,150,000 (WAN, web).<sup>11</sup> Throughout one-party rule, the *Standard* tried to remain critical of the government.

The now dominant Nation Media Group, the largest media organization in East and Central Africa, had humble beginnings with the first publication of a small weekly Kiswahili paper in 1958. *Taifa* became a daily in 1960; that year the group launched no fewer than three other Kenyan newspapers: *Taifa Leo*, *Sunday Nation* and the *Daily Nation*. In the 1960s the *Daily Nation*'s circulation hovered between 15,000 and 18,000. In 1968 it overtook the *East African Standard* with average sales of around 34,000; by 1993 it had reached 135,000 daily. The *Daily Nation*, principally owned by the Aga Khan, now has the highest circulation in the country. In 1996, the Group expanded to include a regional weekly, the *East African*, also aimed at Tanzania and Uganda (Higiro, 5).

Nancy Worthington notes that, as the most widely circulated newspaper, the *Daily Nation* enjoys greater credibility than its rivals (Worthington, 68). In 1999, the paper had a circulation of 220,000 and a readership over double that of its closest rival, the *Standard*, at three million (WAN, web). In fact, that year the country's population was approximately 30 million – thus, about one in ten Kenyans read the *Nation*. This is especially impressive given that about 42 per cent of the nation's population is under 15 (CIA, web). Although the Group sold public shares in the last two decades, substantial

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<sup>11</sup> Clearly for both dailies, if one person buys a paper they don't read it on their own, explaining the staggering difference between circulation and readership.

control remains in foreign hands. In 1995, Worthington wrote that the paper's relatively strong financial base, which predates independence, "affords the publication substantial autonomy within the broader limitations imposed by the authoritarian government" (Worthington, 69). But the paper was not completely immune from state intervention. In a bizarre 1981 case, senior *Nation* editors were detained in police custody for five days simply for describing a KANU statement as "anonymous" (Legal Resources Foundation, 14) instead of attributing it to a government source. This type of state action was not atypical for the period.

In 1982, Kenya became a *de jure* one-party state. Throughout the 1980s, the party was notorious for mass media oppression, including harassing journalists, charges in criminal court against reporters and editors, impounding equipment and banning publications outright. In 1988, *Beyond*, a church magazine was banned, followed the next year by the *Financial Review* and *Development Agenda*. As a result of such intense pressure, the press was seldom overtly critical (Higiro, 3). The spate of media bans from 1988 to 1990 led to international pressure on President Moi from aid donors to loosen control. By 1991, a new generation of politically subversive press was emerging including *Society* and *Finance*, both of which covered sensitive stories such as the state-sanctioned murder of Dr. Robert Ouko, Minister of Foreign Affairs. Still, all media outlets continued to be the subject of more subtle harassment, aimed at destroying their economic viability.

The first official multi-party elections were held in 1992, and political space in the country widened significantly. Publications across the country mushroomed, including a number of local language newspapers and a Task Force on Press Law was established in

1994. Still, Kenyan newspapers were forced to operate under the watchful eye of the Government, which as late as 1995, continued to detain journalists for political purposes. The threat of detention and prosecution under sedition laws naturally encouraged self-censorship among reporters and editors (Worthington, 69). Reports from media representative unions (such as the Kenya Union of Journalists) and independent local and international non-governmental organizations also detailed informal repression of journalists through political humiliation and harassment (Legal Resources Foundation, 3). The Moi government frequently blamed media for scaring away tourists and foreign investors but also of serving foreign interests (Legal Resources Foundation, 25).

The year after the second multi-party elections were held, 1998, was a growth year for Kenyan media. General interest and specialty dailies (*Business Africa*), weeklies (*The Post on Sunday*, *Dispatch*, *Kenya Confidential*, and the *Weekly Sun*) and monthlies (*Market Intelligence*, *The Lawyer*, the *Analyst*, *East African Alternatives*, and *The Kenyan*) appeared. The rural press also saw a boom with new titles such as *Coast Today* and *Concord* in Mombasa, *Weekly Mirror* in Eldoret, and the *Mirror* in Kisii (Higiuro, 3). The print media in Kenya have continued to expand significantly in recent years, with a proliferation of weekly newspapers, magazines, and alternative media in local languages entering the market. Still none has gained the capacity and scope of coverage and circulation of the three oldest newspapers (the *Daily Nation*, the *East African Standard* and the *Kenya Times*). Since Moi's fall, the airwaves have also opened up significantly. The country now has, in addition to four national newspapers and numerous local ones, 22 radio and 13 television stations broadcasting (Owade on Agenda Item 11, par. 16).

Government intervention, before and after Moi, relied heavily on the courts, with the general goal being the protection of public figures. Between late 2000 and 2003, fewer than ten journalists were jailed for spreading rumours and false stories (in essence, libel), but under defamation and libel laws the courts awarded Kshs 100,000,000 (about \$1,600,000 CAD). As one observer noted, this corresponded to sums higher than those awarded against insurance companies for accidents resulting in loss of life (Legal Resources Foundation, 38). In a defamation case involving one of the most corrupt officials in the state bureaucracy, against the editor-in-chief of the *People Daily*, Judge Aluoch award Kshs 20 million and stated that the new policy of the courts was to “adopt a stern approach to libel” and that high damages would be paid “not to stifle [the press] but to encourage mature and responsible journalism” (quoted in Legal Resources Foundation, 39).

The Government employed another financial tactic to curb the press toward the very end of the Moi regime. In May 2002 a new and unpopular media bill was passed. The *Statute Miscellaneous Amendment Act, 2002* required publishers to pay an exorbitantly high start-up bond, and effectively shut out potential smaller, alternative operations.<sup>12</sup> The amendment, which is part of the *Books and Newspapers Act*, forces existing newspapers to pay in order to continue publishing. The law was actually signed in 2003 (after the NARC victory), showing, critics argue, that democratization in Kenya has not been fully realized (Legal Resources Foundation, 22).

The media industry has, particularly since independence, struggled with Government regulation, favouring self-regulation instead. The Government says it has to

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<sup>12</sup> The legislation raised publisher’s mandatory insurance bond to one million Kenyan shillings (approx, 15,940.04 CAD), and required publishers to submit a copy of their publication to the government registrar. Penalties for non-compliance include stiff fines and jail time.

regulate the media, because they don't have the capacity to self-regulate. In one of the first attempts to self-regulate, the Media Industry Steering Committee (MISC) launched the *Code of Conduct and Practice of Journalism in Kenya* in 2001. The MISC was then instrumental in laying the groundwork for the Media Council of Kenya, which was established in 2002 to resolve complaints and improve journalistic standards. The Council -- made up of members of the public -- has also drawn up a code of conduct for ethical journalism. The new Media Council is to work as an arbitration body between the public and the media, so as to avoid court action. Despite this attempt at self-regulation, the Kenyan government, the media and other stakeholders are in the process of drafting a *Freedom of Information Act*, but there is no clear sign of when this new legislation will become law.

Despite the NARC win in December 2002, the Kenyan press continues to struggle with government control. For one thing, the 2002 *Statute Miscellaneous Amendment Act* has yet to be repealed, and the *East African Standard* still has over 100 libel suits filed against it. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) on May 20, 2005 voiced concern over the

[C]urrent dire state of relations between the Kenyan press and President Mwai Kibaki's administration, which have deteriorated sharply over the past two weeks in a series of public clashes that are all the more shocking in a country that has enjoyed relative stability until now (Freedom of Expression Exchange, web).

RSF was specifically referring to an incident involving the First Lady, Lucy Kibaki. Shortly before midnight on 2 May 2005, she led a heavy-handed raid on the premises of the Nation Media Group, accompanied by her bodyguards and Nairobi's chief of police. She stayed in the newspaper's offices for several hours, insulting and threatening journalists because of their "unfair" reports about her, and demanding their

immediate arrest. The incident was reported internationally, and press relations with the Kenyan Government deteriorated sharply almost immediately thereafter.

In spring 2005, international press monitor Freedom House ranked Kenya 61 out of 194 countries on its annual press freedom survey. The country was ranked 25 out of 48 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and labeled "Not Free." Kenya's rating declined this year from Partly Free to Not Free due to a government crackdown on the tabloid presses at the start of the year, and a "failure to liberalize the country's draconian media laws" (Freedom House, web). Strangely, given the lower ranking, the Freedom House authors conclude, "Although official pressure and bribery led some journalists to practice self-censorship, the private print media are generally outspoken and critical of government policies" (Freedom House, web).

Another international organization viewed the Kenyan press favourably this year. The International Press Institute (IPI) held its 2005 World Congress in Nairobi in May,<sup>13</sup> where attention was on what it calls "the great strides" the country is making, including in the areas of press freedom and freedom of expression. The four-day event featured panel sessions on Africa, press freedom, and the media industry in general. Prominent speakers included President Mwai Kibaki of Kenya, President Paul Kagame of Rwanda and His Highness, the Aga Khan (International Freedom Press Exchange, web). Wilfred D. Kiboro, Chairman of the IPI and Group Chief Executive Officer of the Nation Media Group, in his opening remarks told the conference:

The Kenya we are meeting in today, is a very different Kenya from the country it would have been if this Congress had taken place here five years ago.

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<sup>13</sup> This was IPI's third visit to Kenya. The Institute held its World Congress in Nairobi in 1968, under the patronage of President Jomo Kenyatta, and again in 1981, under President Daniel arap Moi.

Kenya was in the throes of a struggle for democracy, that was sweeping other parts of Africa, Eastern Europe, and Asia. The fruits of that struggle came in December 2002 when a coalition led by President Kibaki won the elections. It became one of the few cases in Africa where a constitutional opposition defeated a long-ruling party.

Because of that, there are many voices in society that feel that the new government formed by former reformists should be treated with "more understanding". In other words, that the work of questioning media has ended, and now the media should be a partner.

No one would disagree with that, except that partner tends to be taken to mean cheer leader (Kiboro, statement).

### **Notes on the Kenyan news style**

Far from being a cheerleader, the Kenyan press have, particularly since December 2002, maintained 'negative news' as a common news value. Jean Kamau, writing in an opinion piece in the *Standard*, says the focus on negative news is bringing on a crisis of credibility for the Kenyan press (*Media bias is so evident, yet so self-defeating to its perpetrators*, *Standard*, March 13, 2005). Kamau writes, "There are some media in the post-KANU period that never miss an opportunity to embarrass State House or the Office of the President, something unheard of during the Kenyatta and Moi eras." The writer continues, arguing the NARC political elite find themselves "disenfranchised" by the media. "In fact, only rarely nowadays are both sides of the story being heard, especially on the subject of the so-called 'New Corruption.' Whatever happened to the principle of right-of-reply in the Kenyan media?" Kamau says that in the 1990s, the press rarely went to print with a major scoop without first alerting the subject (Moi government figure) about what was coming and seeking his or her response. Kamau concludes that at this

rate, the greatest loss of credibility is likely to happen not so much to the Presidency and its power networks, but the negative news corporations themselves.

In a second commentary on the negative portrayal of President Kibaki in the press, the writer argues that history will likely judge the leader less harshly (*History likely to judge Kibaki kindly*, Nation, February 18, 2005). “We could say that although nowadays the Press seems to be constantly full of the most virulent criticisms and condemnation of President Kibaki and his government, the judgment of history will almost certainly be a lot kinder... Future generations will most likely see him as the man who gave children from poor families the opportunity for free education, and a president who opened up democratic space in Kenya, and gave the country its first real taste of political freedom.”

It should also be noted that the Kenyan news style is unique, somewhere between a tabloid and a broadsheet. The pyramid structure is usually, but not always, followed in news stories. As Kodi Barth notes in his column, *Media Maverick*, Kenyan reporters don't seem to appreciate the power of great quotes. In many cases they bury quotes at the bottom of the story (Kodi Barth, *Newspapers need to tell the story better, deeper*, Sunday Standard, May 23, 2004). This, he says, is in sharp contrast to the world standard of using a quote by the third paragraph, after the introduction (or lead). Barth also accuses Kenyan reporters of ignoring the ‘nut graph’, the paragraph in which the reader gets the gist of the story. Too often, he writes, Kenyan stories read like “roadside chatter”, flip-flopping back and forth before getting to the point.

In many ways, the two leading dailies are very similar. But Makotsi-Sittoni, managing editor of the *Standard* and formerly of the *Nation*, says the latter is “a very stiff

paper. There are things that are rigid, they are done in a certain way, and they will always be done in a certain way. Standard is fairly liberal, and as an editor you have a lot of freedom to do whatever you want. Nation has a lot of people who have been in the media for so long and are set in their ways, the Standard is fairly young-minded, people want to experiment, people are always trying new things” (Makotsi-Sittoni, June 4, 2004).

### **Status of women in Kenya**

The new government coming to power in 2002 brought the promise of change for Kenyan women as well as the media. The following discussion will give a brief overview of women’s current status in the country. This will include statistics on literacy, income levels, participation in the workforce and status within the domestic sphere. It is important to address women’s representation in positions of power, such as Parliament. This section is not meant to be comprehensive, rather it aims to give a brief overview of the issues and challenges Kenyan women face. Betty Kaari Murungi, a High Court of Kenya advocate, summarizes the problems faced by Kenyan women succinctly:

Discrimination and violence against women have characterized Kenya in both the public and private spheres. The regime change did not mark a departure in this respect. Marginal gains were recorded in the area of political participation but these are so minute as to be insignificant statistically. While the Draft Constitution now being debated holds promise for women, it remains a draft, with completion of the process being months away with no clear indication as to when it will conclude. In the meantime, women continue to be traumatized by the violence and to suffer the effects of marginalization and exclusion (Murungi, 51).

Although local studies on gender began in earnest in the seventies, interest in women’s welfare dates back to the 1950s with the inception of the Maendaleo Ya Wanawake (‘Women’s Progress’). In 1952, the then white-led organisation aimed to raise

women's living standards by promoting rural development. Muthoni Karega and Mary Masinde write of the group; "It was not radical in nature, and avoided the male dominated world, preferring to confine itself to women's affairs" (Karega and Masinde, 9). African women did not participate in Maendeleo's activities until after independence.

During the colonial period, native Kenyan women were confined to the private sphere. Traditionally, men were heads of households. In many groups, particularly in western Kenya, when a husband died another man within the clan inherited his widow. The Mau Mau liberation movement changed women's status; with men drawn away to war, many families "suddenly found themselves under the stewardship of women" (Karega and Masinde, 9). A large number of women also joined the fight, while others conveyed food and ammunition to freedom fighters in the forests (AWC, 11). Yet at independence in 1963, no women were elected to Parliament. In fact, during the Lancaster House negotiations around the constitution, the only woman delegate, Priscilla Abwao, was not allowed to speak (Njenge, 23).

The Constitution of Kenya for many years did *not* prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sex.<sup>14</sup> In 1997, Section 82 was amended to outlaw discrimination on the grounds of sex, but the Judicature Act permits application of customary law. Many scholars see this override as the root cause of the majority of social problems and rights abuses faced by women in the country (Karega and Masinde, 10). "Constitutional equality is at the heart of women's impoverishment, the gender imbalance in access to decision-making and access to resources" (Chesoni, 26). Omuodo writes of the legal system:

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<sup>14</sup> Under the current constitution, for example, foreign men who are married to Kenyan women cannot be accorded citizenship (Njenge, 23).

Changes in the legal system in Kenya have not coincided with the rapidly growing needs to provide equal opportunities for men and women. The Kenya Constitution still remains silent on the equality of men and women. The consequence is that the Constitution allows women and men to be treated differently before the law. As long as Kenyan society remains one where legal rules affect men and women differently, they will have different paths in life, different living conditions, with different needs and opportunities (quoted in Karega and Masinde, 11-12).

In recent years, there has been a lot of talk (and not much action) on the subject of women and the law. The Kenya Women's Election Manifesto in 1997 joined the call for a new constitution, noting law reform as *the* most critical area of concern for women. The document outlined inadequate and ambiguous legal frameworks that result in tremendous injustice for women – in social, economic and political contexts as varied as land ownership and domestic violence (AWC, 15). The NARC manifesto, published before the December 2002 general elections, identified women's empowerment as an essential tenet of the party's ideology, considering gender equality "a necessary pre-condition for national development and the realization of the full potential of each and every Kenyan" (Chesoni, 30). The party promised 30 per cent representation in Parliament, local government and public appointments. Women's needs and priorities would be considered equally in the national budget, and the party would implement legislation to end cases of violence against women. Lastly, NARC's government would adhere to all international conventions on gender (Muthoni, 1).

Kenya has acceded to various regional and international instruments relating to women's rights, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and is in the process of ratifying the Protocol to the African Charter on Rights of Women in Africa (Agenda Item 18, par. 3). Kenya also adopted the Beijing Platform for Action in November 1996, but took a step

backwards a week later, when the same House resoundingly rejected another motion that would have made female genital mutilation illegal<sup>15</sup> (the Beijing Platform clearly recognizes the dangerous health repercussions of this practice). Another motion calling for affirmative action in politics was also defeated (AWC, 14).

The Draft Constitution, the entrenchment of which was another key NARC election promise, *does* prohibit discrimination based on sex and contains a comprehensive *Bill of Rights* (Chap.6, Art.37), with detailed provisions for women. The draft also commits the government to affirmative action in a number of key areas. In the absence of constitutional guarantees, the new government has recently undertaken legislative measures to protect gender equality, including enacting the *National Commission on Gender and Development Act*<sup>16</sup> which establishes a National Commission on Gender to “mainstream gender issues in all aspects of public life” (Agenda Item 12, par. 7). While the Act has passed, the Commission is not yet operational. In the meantime, gender issues remain under the Women’s Bureau, a division of the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services. The Bureau is notoriously understaffed and under-funded; as a result monitoring and evaluation has been done only on an ad-hoc basis and gender-disaggregated data have never been produced for most sectors (the only exceptions being basic education levels and some aspects of health care). In addition, gender focal points were created in other ministries, but these remain either ineffective or non-functional (largely because they never had a specific budget for gender activities!) (Republic of Kenya, 28).

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<sup>15</sup> Female genital mutilation (FGM) is now illegal in Kenya.

<sup>16</sup> The National Commission on Gender and Development Act 2003, No. 13 of 2003, was passed and is already operational as of January 9, 2004

The lack of gender-disaggregated data presents additional challenges for analysts attempting to determine the exact nature of gender discrimination in the country. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) estimated annual earned income for women in 2002 at \$962, compared to \$1,067 for men. However, the 'earned income' calculated uses the nonagricultural wage. This is quite problematic, given that women do the majority of the work in agriculture, the main economic activity in Kenya.<sup>17</sup> In May 1996, the UNDP estimated women do about 65 per cent of the work in farming (Patel, par.2). The majority of women are still engaged in subsistence and smallholder agricultural production. Thus, Kenyan women's annual income is likely lower than the \$962 figure, because the majority of women in the country work in a sector that is not being tallied. In 2003, Kenya ranked 114th out of 144 countries for the UNDP's Gender-Related Development Index.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the bleak situation, the NARC government, at least on the surface, appears determined to rectify centuries-old gender imbalances, reaffirming this commitment at the Commission on Human Rights in March of 2005.<sup>19</sup> The introduction of free primary education in January 2003, in fulfillment of one of NARC's key election pledges, was a major development milestone in the country. Girls actually benefited more from this measure, as families that had previously chosen only one child to go to school

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<sup>17</sup> According to the CIA World Factbook, 75 per cent of the Kenyan labour force is engaged in the agricultural sector (CIA web).

<sup>18</sup> Kenya HDI- 0.488; Kenya GDI- 0.486

The gender-related development index (GDI), introduced in the Human Development Report 1995, measures achievements in the same dimensions using the same indicators as the HDI but captures inequalities in achievement between women and men. It is simply the HDI adjusted downward for gender inequality. The greater the gender disparity in basic human development, the lower is a country's GDI relative to its HDI.

<sup>19</sup> "The Government of the Republic of Kenya is firmly committed to achieving gender equality, promoting and protecting human rights of women and girls as we are convinced that sustainable development is not possible without the full involvement of women in the nation building process" (Agenda Item 12, par 2)

for cost reasons (usually the boy) now had all of their children enrolled. The government also introduced quota systems in primary and secondary schools which it says has significantly increased the level of girls' school enrolment (Agenda Item 12, par. 10). The number of girls enrolled in secondary schools increased from 341,249 in 1999 to 415,246 in 2003. In 2003, 303,906 boy candidates registered for primary school examinations, compared to 284,054 girls, nearing the 50/50 mark (Agenda Item 12, par. 12). At the university level, affirmative action was introduced by lowering the admission requirements for female students by one point (Republic of Kenya, 3).

Affirmative action in education and other official measures may finally bridge the gender literacy gap, which remains significant. The 1999 population census indicated that 22 per cent of women had never been to school, compared to 14 per cent of men (UNDP web). The UNDP estimates the adult literacy rate for women (ages 15 and above in 2002) at 78.5 per cent compared to men, in the same age category, at 90 per cent.

Sadly, the good news for women and girls in education is not mirrored in other social areas. Although Wangari Maathai won the Nobel Peace Prize for her work on the environment in 2004, Kenyan women are still negatively affected on a day-to-day basis by the degradation of their environment. While it is true environmental factors affect all Kenyans, women as the main producers of food, and the majority of the poor and disadvantaged in the country are more seriously affected by adverse environmental conditions. Only about 50 per cent of Kenya's rural and 75 per cent of the urban population have access to safe drinking water (Republic of Kenya, 25). Women in rural areas still travel long distances every day to procure water and fuel wood, time that might be better spent on more productive activities. Because of high poverty rates, 90 per cent

of rural and 85 per cent of urban households rely on wood for fuel, leading to deforestation problems that have yet to be adequately addressed by government (Republic of Kenya, 25). As the wood supply shrinks, women have to walk farther to collect fuel. Further, fewer female-headed households than male-headed households have access to piped water, and more of the latter use firewood for fuel. According to the latest census data, the proportion of female-headed households continues to increase, rising from 35 per cent in 1989 to 37 per cent in 1999, mostly in the rural areas (CBS, ix).

One of the reasons female-headed households are on the increase is the damage done in the wake of the AIDS pandemic. Undeniably the most important health issue<sup>20</sup> in Kenya today, as elsewhere on the African continent, is the devastation caused by HIV/AIDS. However, as the primary caregivers for infected relatives and orphaned children, women often bear the brunt of the disease.

AIDS is more than a medical problem – it has significant social and economic dimensions. Virtually all aspects of development have felt the disease's severe impact at household, community and national levels. At the end of 2001, 2.5 million Kenyans were living with the disease, an adult prevalence rate of 13.5 per cent (Republic of Kenya, 13). Those suffering from the disease require long-term intensive care, and thus occupy a sizeable number of hospital beds. With an already strained healthcare budget (Kenya spends approximately 2.7 per cent of GDP on health), the government has not been able

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<sup>20</sup> Other challenges in the health sector include rapid population growth. For more than 20 years, Kenya experienced a dramatic decline in fertility from 8.1 children per woman in 1977 to 4.9 in 2002. In 2003, the number inched up to five. (Citizen, October 24, 2004) Also a problem is declining per capita resource allocation to health (the result of the country's poor economic performance).<sup>20</sup> The result is high maternal, under five and infant mortality rates. Kenya is unlikely to meet the Millenium Development Goals targets for infant and under-five mortality of 33/1000 by 2015. Malaria, despite countless prevention programs involving mosquito nets and drugs, continues to kill. Every year about 34,000 children below age five die of illnesses related to malaria and about 145,000 children in the same age bracket are admitted to hospital for malaria.<sup>20</sup>

to meet the needs of AIDS patients. And there are fewer and fewer able bodies contributing to the national economy. AIDS has claimed the lives of thousands of productive workers since the first case was reported in 1984 (Patel, 288). Further, young adult women, in their productive prime, are the most frequently affected. As is the trend throughout the continent, more girls and young women are becoming infected (Mathu, 10).

The links between poverty and AIDS are extensive. Since the government is unable to help, communities and families are left to battle the disease on their own. Beyond not being able to afford anti-retrovirals, many also cannot afford a balanced diet that would help to fight off symptoms. To make matters worse, women widowed by AIDS are often abandoned by family, and lose matrimonial property to the deceased's relatives. Many such widows are forced to move to urban slums or turn to prostitution to generate income, where the infection cycle continues (Mathu, 11).

Widows and girl children of the deceased have few property rights in Kenya. In fact, women own only five per cent of the land in the country (Linah Kilimo, *It's time to change this oppressive pattern*, Nation, May 30, 2004). The issue of property rights for women is one of the most important rights questions in Kenya today. The root of the problem is that Section 82 (4 (b and c)) of the Constitution permits sex discrimination in matters of personal law on devolution of property and marriage, allowing 'customary law' to take precedence in these cases (Chesoni, 26). Maina Kiai, the Chairman of the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, said in April 2005, "The major impediment to women's property inheritance rights is the emergence of a new culture – couched as tradition – across all ethnic groups and communities in Kenya that leads to

the disinheritance of women both from their fathers and from their husbands” (Kiai, 3). This ‘new tradition’ cuts across ethnic and class lines. One famous example is the handling of the estate of late Vice President Kijana Wamalwa and the treatment of his widow, Yvonne Wamalwa, by his clan, the Baengele (Chesoni, 26). Wamalwa’s death led to a protracted fight with extensive mud-slinging in the press. If someone with such high social status and the means to fight in court cannot protect herself and her children from being left homeless and penniless, what can be expected of less prominent women? In a country where life expectancy has declined quickly, largely as a result of the AIDS pandemic, recent cultural norms have seen many women left in poverty, without any means of support after the death of a male family member.

Miloon Kothari, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, made a special visit to report on housing and property rights in Kenya. Kenya noted in its official response to Kothari’s concerns at the Commission on Human Rights that “Customary practices, which are cited by the Rapporteur, are in law, superceded by the Constitution, other Acts of Parliament and subsidiary legislation” (Statement by Philip Owade on Adequate Housing, 2). However, when the Constitution specifically allows for customary law to take precedence in cases of death and divorce, the government is clearly unwilling to address the problem.

In some areas, the government has responded to curb certain cultural practices that negatively affect girls. The government has banned female genital mutilation and raised the age of consensual sex from 16 to 18 in an effort to deal with child marriages (Agenda Item 12, par. 9). Still, FGM and girl brides remain problems. For the first time in 1998, the Kenya Health and Demographic Survey included questions on FGM and found that

38 per cent of women had undergone the procedure. In 2003, the survey found that 34 per cent of women had undergone FGM, but in communities where FGM was almost universally practiced there was very little change (FGM Network, web). In 2004, over 15,000 girls in North Eastern Province were said to have had their genitals cut (*Female genital mutilation is still common in Somali community*, Standard, May 19, 2004).

MP Njoki Ndungu announced in Parliament in 2004 that two women are raped every hour in Kenya (*Rape cases on the increase, says MP*, Standard, April 7, 2004). Between January and August 2004, police records indicated 1,895 reported rape cases, but many more went unreported (*Rape named as worst rights abuse in Kenya*, Nation, May 31, 2005). Data compiled by the Federation of Women Lawyers Kenya (FIDA-K) suggests that violations of women's human rights are on the increase, but none of the documents and reports gave a clear indication of the reasons behind this rise. An editorial in the *Standard* notes, "Experts put this down to rising pressure at home and what is perceived to be hard economic life for families especially in the rural areas" (*Worrying violence*, Standard, February 19, 2005). Domestic violence continues to be the most common form of violence in Kenya and is characterized by physical, sexual or psychological harm or threats. On the topic of violence against women, nationwide surveys undertaken by Population Communication Africa in association with the National Council of Women of Kenya in 2001/2002 found that:

- Gender abuse and violence continues to be a widespread phenomenon among Kenyan women and girls, despite efforts by governments and ngos to address the problem;
- Physical and sexual assault is most commonplace among young girls who are (particularly at puberty) vulnerable to harassment by older males within homes and schools;

- For many adolescent girls and young adult women, further abuse episodes are associated with early marriage, with intimate partners or male relatives as perpetrators;
- 37 per cent of Kenyan women and girls surveyed reported current ongoing or multiple physical abuse in adult years (Republic of Kenya, 15).

On the other hand, more gender crimes are being reported to police; between 1997 and 2003, reports of rapes and attempted rapes doubled, and FIDA-K received a steady increase in requests for legal aid in the same period (Republic of Kenya, 16). Nevertheless, of 2,184 cases filed by molested women, only 113 led to convictions. Often the courts dismissed the cases because the evidence was not deemed strong enough (Linah Kilimo, *It's time to change this oppressive pattern*, Nation, May 30, 2004).

The government has taken what it calls a “proactive approach” to curb gender violence, embarking on a sensitization campaign, and special police units have been created to deal with incidents of violence and rape (Agenda Item 12 par. 8). But once again the law is slow to protect Kenyan women. The Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Bill, key legislation in the fight to end violence against women, is still pending, and has been for five years.

Despite some government initiatives, women remain disadvantaged in the public sphere as well. In its report on ten years of implementing the Beijing Platform for Action, the government said, “In the last three years the Government has made deliberate efforts to mobilize the full creative and productive potential of women thus reducing gender inequality and increasing women’s participation in political affairs and economic activities” (Agenda Item 12, par. 4). But, the State admits, “Women are greatly disadvantaged in political activities and other office holding spheres” (Republic of Kenya, 6).

The NARC government has not made good on its campaign promises to achieve equal participation of men and women in decision-making. Government appointments continue to fall short of the promised one-third representation, although women play a significant role in the electoral process (Muthoni, 1). Women are the majority voters both in parliamentary and civic elections, and are the main canvassers at polling time.<sup>21</sup>

Women's equal participation in politics plays a key role in the general process of women's advancement. African Women and Child Features wire service staff write: "Equality in political decision-making performs a leverage function without which it is highly unlikely that a real integration of the equality dimension in policy-making is feasible" (AWC, 9).

Since the introduction of multi-party politics in 1992, women's participation in politics has grown significantly. The number of women parliamentarians has doubled from nine in 1999 to 18 out of 222 (eight of whom were nominated MPs) in 2002, the largest number of women legislators since independence. For the first time in Kenya's history, seven women were appointed to ministerial posts, three to Cabinet, and four as Assistant Ministers. The markedly improved performance by women in the 2002 elections was a complete break with history; under KANU, women's performance in politics had been consistently poor (AWC, 8). Most women candidates aligned themselves with the NARC opposition, who campaigned on a platform of social service – a promise of free education, free health care and better infrastructure. Nevertheless, Kenya, at just over four per cent women's representation still lags, behind its neighbours, Uganda and Tanzania. The Ugandan parliament has 75 women out of 304 and Tanzania

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<sup>21</sup> In 1997, women were 20 to 30 per cent more likely to vote (Patel, par 2)

has 61 out of 274 (AWC, 8). Rwanda,<sup>22</sup> with a new constitution, now has the highest percentage of women parliamentarians in the world (Chesoni, 27). Enid Muthoni, in explaining Kenyan women's poor performance in elections, notes a parallel between gender and marriage in electoral success. If a candidate is unmarried, she is seen as unreliable because there is always the possibility that she will marry and go to live in her husband's constituency. "Even if she is contesting in a constituency she is married in, the woman is likely to be discredited for being a stranger seeking to lead the community as if there were no competent men to do so" (Muthoni, 8).

The story is much the same at the community level. In 2002, women's representation in local authorities increased from eight per cent to 13.3 per cent (Agenda Item 12, par. 5), but still falls far short of the one-third mark. During a speech to FIDA-K in Nairobi in March 1991, Kitty Hempstone, wife of the then-American ambassador to Kenya, remarked:

From sea to lake, Kenya is alive with training and development. I have visited many of these projects as we travel and have been impressed with the energy, the determination and the skill of the women participating. Because most of these projects involve rural women with little formal education, I find their accomplishments truly remarkable. What I do not see ... are women represented on district development committees. Neither do I see them on marketing boards or cooperative committees despite the fact that women are the base of our agricultural economy. I see a country of tremendous potential under-utilising its greatest asset – its women (quoted in Patel, 288).

The majority of Kenyan women are still more concerned with work in the agricultural economy and challenges in the home than in politics. Since the 1990s, many

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<sup>22</sup> As of October 2003, Rwandan women held 48.8 per cent of the seats in the National Assembly and the country has come the closest of any country in reaching parity between men and women in a national parliament. Of 80 seats in the National Assembly, 24 were reserved for women under the new Constitution. But women also won 15 non-reserved seats, yielding a total of 39 seats held in the lower house and six out of 20 seats in the Senate, the upper house. (UNDP-Rwanda, web)

non-governmental organizations have sprung up to help women gain access to the political sphere, at all levels. To name just two: the Education Centre for Women and Democracy aims to aid more women to achieve leadership positions, both at national and community levels; and the League of Kenya Women Voters was founded in 1992 to promote women's participation in decision-making.

A major part of the work of women's organizations is training the few women leaders who have emerged to recognize the potential of the media and use the media to their advantage. The Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK) has helped women parliamentarians, local authorities, and community organization leaders to seek out media and increase their level of coverage. During the 2002 elections, AMWIK produced an eight-page newsletter that ran for six issues introducing female candidates and those who had succeeded at being elected to Parliament. AMWIK continues to serve a focal point for women's organizations and helping to mobilize the media for coverage.

Despite efforts by numerous organizations, women, particularly in the rural areas, still have limited access to sources of information. Women's time is spent working in the fields, or in the markets. Newspaper readership of course is low, due to high levels of illiteracy (Mutua-Kombo, 194). Eda Mutua-Kombo explains the challenges the media have in connecting with rural women.

The media are said to be "far" from women. The language of the media, mainly English, was said to be inappropriate to women who in the majority are non-literate. Women had no contacts with the media, so they did not understand the role the media play in provision of information to rural areas (Mutua-Kombo, 194).

Due to Kenya's widespread poverty and illiteracy, urban newspapers like the *Nation* and the *Standard* should be considered part of an elite medium. Thus, the following analysis

should be read knowing that the newspapers' readers are likely to be urban, relatively affluent, and disproportionately male (Worthington, 70-71).

### CHAPTER 3: CONTENT ANALYSIS

The purpose of the preceding chapters was to establish the context for a content analysis of women in the Kenyan news. In Chapter 1, the symbolic annihilation of women in the news was discussed, along with the concept of news as discourse. It was suggested that the news discourse, in Africa and elsewhere, is essentially male. Previous research on women showed existing patterns of news coverage in which women and their views are under-represented, and women's issues trivialized. In Chapter 2, the Kenyan situation was discussed, including: a political state in transition along with an expanding media system, and women's current socio-economic status in the country. The purpose of the second chapter was to show women's role in a national context in which media organizations also play a part.

In this chapter, the question is posed: What is the current state of news coverage of women and women's issues in an era of political change? In order to answer this question, I conducted my own primary research; content analysis was supplemented by material from personal interviews. Using the Beijing Platform for Action as a guide, I have attempted to identify areas and issues in the news. This chapter will describe the findings of that analysis and discuss their implications. Ultimately, it was found that news coverage of women in Kenya is limited, and when they do appear women's voices are generally incidental, and come from a limited set of social positions, or 'roles'.

First, I look at features of news presentation including byline, placement, sources quoted, and front-page photographs, to examine how these affect women's portrayal in the daily news. I also compare editorials and opinions to regular news items. Second, I look at the underlying themes of news coverage. What kinds of news stories do women

appear in? What kinds of stories do they not appear in? When they do appear, are women central or incidental sources to the story? Are women appearing only in certain roles, such as victims and mothers?

Lastly, although not part of the survey sample, I conclude with a discussion of special sections recently launched in the dailies. In the past 10 years, Kenyan newspapers have introduced a vast array of pull-outs on sports, entertainment, and lifestyle, many aimed directly at women.

## **Method**

The content analysis is based on a five-month period from February 1 to June 30, 2005. The two newspapers examined are the *Daily Nation*, the paper with the largest circulation in the country, with a daily readership estimated at three million in 2002 (Ndung'u, 2), and the *East African Standard*, second with a circulation of 1,150,000.

This study examined primarily web versions. The digital format makes searching, word counts and coding more efficient. To ensure the sample papers were representative of their offline counterparts, an agreement was reached with the Kenyan embassy in Ottawa to examine their archives. The online and print editions turned out to be effectively identical in terms of content and presentation.

Using the raw data gathered from these two Kenyan daily newspapers, a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis was employed to provide a snapshot of women's representation in the Kenyan press. As this study was focused on Kenyan news only, international news stories were ignored. Secondly, the main sections of News

and Politics were coded, but Business, Sports, Entertainment and Lifestyle & Beauty sections were excluded from the survey sample.

The sampling device used to make sure that all parts of the week, month and quarter are represented is the “composite week.” In his textbook *Mass Communication Research*, Singletary defines the technique: “[A composite week] is formed by taking, for example, a Monday from one week, a Tuesday from another and so on, until the period is filled. This minimizes the dominance of a single story or cyclical story.” (Singletary, 289) Computer-generated random numbers were used to choose each day of two composite weeks. Using this technique, two composite weeks<sup>23</sup> were populated and both newspapers were evaluated for each day of those weeks.

As was discussed in the Introduction, the Beijing Platform, which provides the framework for this analysis, outlines 12 critical areas of concern toward achieving gender equality:

1. The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women
2. Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to education and training
3. Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to health care and related services
4. Violence against women
5. The effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation
6. Inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources
7. Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels
8. Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women
9. Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women
10. Stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media

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<sup>23</sup> The days coded were as follows: Monday February 28, Tuesday February 8, Wednesday March 23, Thursday May 26, Friday March 11, Saturday February 19, Sunday March 13, Monday April 25, Tuesday April 5, Wednesday June 1, Thursday April 7, Friday March 4, Saturday May 21 and Sunday June 5. Due to technical difficulties, in the Nation, February 28 was replaced by February 21 and May 26 by May 19.

11. Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment
12. Persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl child (Beijing Declaration, web).

In order to facilitate examination of whether these issues are adequately covered in news, the above were regrouped into two broad topics:

### **Topic I: Political and Economic Issues**

Three categories were adopted in this area, as follows:

- a) Politics: anything that has to do with Parliament, the President, the Constitution, political corruption
- b) Economics/Business/Finance: Stories on the budget, labour issues, taxation
- c) Civil Liberties: freedom of speech, freedom of association, law and order

### **Topic II: Social issues**

This topic encompasses the many 'social issues' contained in the Beijing document:

- a) Health: Includes any stories on hospitals, HIV/AIDS
- b) Education: Any stories on schooling, teachers
- c) General Poverty: Stories about how the poor are surviving under difficult economic conditions, life in the slums, foreign aid projects
- d) Advancement of the Girl Child: Stories that involve girls specifically, such as on cultural practices like early marriage and female genital mutilation
- e) Environment: Stories on forests, water, wild animals
- f) Violence Against Women: Includes stories on domestic violence, sexual violence, abuses against minors and sexual harassment

A final general category, outside of the two topics, was created for human interest stories. If a story could potentially fall into two categories, the category chosen depended on the most prominent source, or point of view, adopted in the story. For example, if a story focused on an MP's statements on deforestation, it would fall under 'politics'; however, if an account of the same event was predominantly about a forest activists' group staging a protest and the MP responds to them, then it was coded as 'environment'.

News articles, as well as editorials, opinion pieces, and columns that fell into one of the above categories<sup>24</sup> were analysed to determine different *features of presentation* (see Appendix 1 for coding sheet):

1. **Prominence** (word count);
2. **Byline** (Reporter's sex. In most cases, stories have bylines. Coding included 'sex unknown' and 'no byline');
3. **Sources** (Of the sources quoted, what percentage were female? How many lines of text were devoted to each source? Was the source paraphrased or directly quoted? Was the source a government figure,<sup>25</sup> a non-government expert, a lay person, or a report?)

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<sup>24</sup> Total stories in the News and Politics section in the *Standard* was 259 (of which 175 were coded), opinions total was 35 (of which 26 were coded) and editorials 23 (of which 21 were coded). In the *Nation*, the total of news articles was 274 (of which 194 were coded), opinions total was 41 (of which 34 were coded), and editorials 30 (of which 20 were coded). The majority of stories not coded were international news articles.

<sup>25</sup> A 'government figure' was defined to include not only politicians, but also bureaucrats, High Court judges etc. 'Report' included all non-living sources including government documents, surveys, etc.

The **front-page photo** for each of the coded days was also analysed. For photographs, the subject was noted (Are women present?), as well as the topic of the photo (does it fall into one of the above categories), the photo credit and the caption.

In the news features portion, stories are examined for female bylines – do female journalists follow the same pattern as their male counterparts? Also, different item types are compared – do columns and opinion pieces exhibit the same trends as regular news stories? Finally, the two selected papers are compared in terms of their news coverage.

In conjunction with analysis of quantitative features of the news, I also examined *underlying themes* in the coverage of women. In order to uncover what Gallagher calls the “overall patterns of gender representation” in the Kenyan press (Gallagher, 120), and to better understand the gendered characteristics of the news frame, numbers aren’t enough. It is important to ask: Are women associated with particular types of news stories? Are women’s voices framed in particular ways? Do they appear as central or incidental sources? Do women appear only in a small set of pre-determined, gender-specific roles? Thus, along with numeric trends about the frequency of articles about women and the Beijing topics, this study also identifies major themes in women’s representation.

## **Results and Analysis**

There is no doubt from the data that the Kenyan press exclude women and contribute to what Tuchman called the ‘symbolic annihilation’ of women. As will be demonstrated, women are underrepresented, as they are hardly ever quoted; trivialized, as

when they do appear it is often incidental, and not central to the story; and stereotyped as victims. These findings are consistent with other research on the portrayal of women in the Kenyan press. Esther Kamweru writes that progress on women's portrayal has been slow and minimal.

The picture that emerges, even from a casual glance in the media especially newspapers, is that majority of women are uninterested and uninvolved in political affairs and developments, the economy and other societal issues. In fact, the contents of general interest and business sections of newspapers and magazines are often dominated by men's affairs. The point is that women are underrepresented in newspapers and magazines (except women's magazines). It would seem as if their interests are limited to beauty and fashion (Kamweru, 67).

Somewhat surprising to the researcher is that the two papers are actually remarkably similar, despite very different histories. This could be the result of significant cross-over between the two papers, both in editorial and at lower levels of staffing. Many journalists have worked for both papers, shifting several times over the course of a career. When new Managing Editor Pamella Makotsi-Sittoni moved to the *Standard*, she was part of a group of 15 editors who were specifically headhunted. Stringers also sell their work to multiple papers; some bylines in this study appeared in both dailies.

Analysis of features of news presentation shows that in both newspapers, women are invisible both in content and as reporters. Van Dijk defined the presentation of news to mean "the structure of occurrence and visual properties that influence its chances of perception and attention" (quoted in Saunders, 285). These quantitative features contribute to the reinforcement of certain persistent themes, which are examined below. First, the features of the news:

## Byline

Bylines in both papers were overwhelmingly male: For the *Nation*: 11 female to 135 male (with 48 no byline), or 5.6 per cent female; the *Standard* had 15 female to 105 male (55 no byline), or nine per cent female (see Tables 1 and 7 for a breakdown of articles by topic and byline). With so many stories being printed without bylines, it is hard to determine how many women were actually writing for either paper. It is assumed, however, that women were overrepresented in the 'no byline' category. Although no exact statistics exist, interviews suggest that women make up about forty per cent of the reporting staff in the two papers' newsrooms, which is far more than the approximately ten per cent female bylines found in this survey.

In the largest news category, politics, just over three-quarters of the stories in the *Nation* were written by men. Since the numbers are so low, it is hard to determine definitively whether a female journalist was more likely to include women as sources in a political story or not (see Tables 2 and 8 for a breakdown of stories with no female sources). Women had, or shared a byline on eight stories; but only two of the 17 stories that did include women had a female byline (both Claire Gatheru). In the *Standard* 58 political stories were written by men, compared to five by women. However, none of the 10 stories that featured women had a female byline. In business and economics, the *Nation* had no female bylines, while the *Standard* had two (both shared).

Thus, two tentative conclusions are reached: First, that women are not very likely to be writing under a byline, and second, that female reporters are no more likely to include female sources in stories on politics and economics than men. There was no

noticeable difference between political and economic stories and social issues stories when it came to female bylines. For social issues stories, there were two female bylines in the *Nation*, and four in the *Standard*. Women were again no more likely than male reporters to include female sources in stories on social issues.

### Sources

Women rarely spoke in the news articles examined for this study. The marginalization of women, even at the expert and governmental level, is evident from gender-disaggregated data on sources: in the *Nation*, male source total was 419 compared to a female source total of 51 (8.8 per cent of sources were women). The *Standard* quoted women slightly more often, with a male source total of 271 and a female source total of 49 (12 per cent of sources were women). This places both papers far below the Southern Africa average of 20 per cent female sources (Lowe Morna, 10).

Women in Kenya still work largely in the informal sector, if at all. As such, they are less likely to appear in the paper as “experts” (in both papers, there are more than five times more male non-governmental experts than female). Due to the relative scarcity of women in politics, they are even less likely to appear as government figures.

Male government figures are by far the most prevalent source type, appearing 254 times in the *Nation* (44 per cent of the total sources), and 165 times in the *Standard* (41 per cent of the total sources). Their constituents, on the other hand, are mostly invisible.

Women do not appear very frequently as sources in political stories. In fact, in the *Standard* 82 per cent of stories on politics had no female sources at all. In the *Nation*, the

number jumps to 89 per cent. This follows a global trend noted in the *Global Media Monitoring Project 2000*, wherein women were primarily featured in stories involving entertainment, and received negligible attention in “hard news” stories such as politics (Gender Links, 23).

Ordinary citizens are virtually invisible and women, due to socio-economic circumstances, are particularly invisible, as they are primarily engaged in the private sphere, unemployed or working in the informal sector. Of the 581 coded sources in the *Nation*, 49 were ordinary citizens (eight per cent), and 8 were female nonprofessional people (less than two per cent). The *Standard* showed similar results: of 401 sources, 45 were lay people<sup>26</sup> (10 per cent) and 13 were female lay people (three per cent) (Tables 3 and 9 give a full breakdown of stories by category and source type). Of no surprise, the news category with the most female lay sources was violence against women with three in each paper.<sup>27</sup> Although three lay women was more than other issues, it was still low given the subject matter. The ‘violence against women’ category continued the pattern of stories without lay sources.

In short, those not engaged in the public sphere (as professionals), do not appear in the paper. Until Kenyan women are employed in equal numbers with their male contemporaries in the public sphere – as politicians or professionals – they are not likely to appear in equal numbers with men as sources in the news.

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<sup>26</sup> It could be argued that lay people are not often quoted because they are likely to be speaking to reporters in a language other than English. However, government figures often give speeches in Swahili, or Kikuyu or their native tongue. In these instances, the paper either translates directly, or includes the Swahili with an English translation following.

<sup>27</sup> The *Global Media Monitoring Project (2000)* also found that female lay people appeared most often as victims of violence.

## Editorials / Opinions

In the Editorial/Opinions sections, the newspapers displayed some of the same patterns found in news articles. The *Standard* printed more political editorials (14 of a total 21), than the *Nation* (9 of 20). For both papers, almost all of the editorial space is devoted to fighting corruption (see Tables 5, 6, 11 and 12 for a breakdown of editorials and opinions by topic). The *Nation* laments that the Government is 700 days late with the Constitution (*New laws won't end graft*, *Nation*, February 19, 2005), and two years of grace period to deliver on graft promises is over (*It's another blow to Kibaki*, *Nation*, February 8, 2005).

The *Standard's* commentary section was overwhelmingly male-authored (24 of 26 op-ed pieces) and political in context (only 3 of 26 op-eds and 4 of 21 editorials on social issues) (see Table 5). Contrary to what interviews had suggested (that women would primarily write on social issues), the two women with bylines wrote on politics and business.

Despite having few women writing, the paper did address women's issues in comments and editorials. On human rights, Kibe Mungai writes on an important issue that was not covered anywhere else in the paper – inheritance laws. “About one month ago,” Mungai writes, “the Court of Appeal consisting of Justices R.S.C. Omolo, Emmanuel O’Kubasu and Philip Waki struck a heavy but hesitant blow for the case of gender discrimination in matters of inheritance” (*Victory for equality*, *Standard*, June 5, 2005). The court, he says, revolutionized Kenya’s law of intestate succession, which had hitherto favoured male children. The Court of Appeal actually rejected a previous High Court ruling, which had allowed for customary law to be applied. Mungai argues that

Kenyan society needs to reflect on the wisdom of keeping certain aspects of customary laws in the face of corruption “by the times we live in and the obvious injustice they work in a modern society.”

The *Standard* also published two short editorials on violence against women. The first on domestic violence takes the position that domestic violence is caused by “psychiatric cases” and as such, tougher penalties will not curb the rise in such cases (*Worrying violence*, *Standard*, February 19, 2005). In a pattern noted elsewhere, the paper seems to be excusing violent criminals. The second piece mentions rape only in passing, as part of a general crime wave: “Every day in the newspapers there are disheartening stories of people killed, robbed, raped and maimed by criminals” (*Stem the bloody tide*, *Standard*, March 11, 2005). In these examples, sexual violence is recognized as part of criminal behaviour, but rape is tacked on in mid-sentence and not mentioned again. With the Mungai comment, this brings the total to three opinion pieces on women’s rights. Comparatively speaking, this is actually more attention than was paid to these issues in articles. But the numbers don’t reveal the actual pattern of coverage. With the exception of Mungai’s piece, sexual violence is either mentioned in passing, or misunderstood.

In an editorial on the hospital staff strike, the *Standard* highlighted the fact that Health Minister Charity Ngilu was crying at the site, but “No amount of tears can wash away the pain and the suffering of the Kenyatta National Hospital patients” (*Tears and suffering*, *Standard*, May 26, 2005). This categorization of Ngilu as emotional and perhaps a little weak was unusual and gender-specific.

Although the *Nation*’s commentary section was quite similar to the *Standard*, the paper showed more diversity in topics. Six of the 34 opinion pieces had a female byline, a

higher ratio than in news articles; three of these six op-eds were on politics and business (see Table 11).

A few commentaries published in the *Nation* were specifically focused on women's issues. One noted the lack of women in the public sector. It began, "With all the attention focused on grand corruption, we should not forget to ask how ordinary Kenyans are experiencing it, and how it is affecting them" (*Why women are 'cleaner' than most men*, *Nation*, April 4, 2005). The mention of both ordinary citizens and women in politics (outside of election time) in the newspaper is unique, because these categories were not often addressed elsewhere. The writer, 'Ms. Njorege', is not a member of the press but a "social-demographer" working with an international development agency.

In another commentary, specifically on women, Lucy Oriang' wrote 1130 words on women's equality and the Beijing process (*Ladies, no surrender, no retreat*, *Nation*, March 11, 2005). Oriang' often devotes her Friday column to women's issues. On this day, she writes about many social issues that affect women in gender-specific ways. For example, in health, nearly 60 per cent of those infected with HIV in Africa are women. Oriang's comment on the New York conference stood out, because the paper had not covered it in news items (although the *Standard* had).

Lastly, a religious column argued a unique pro-choice stance on abortion (*Fifth columnist: Mass murder by abortion of all reason*, *Nation*, March 13, 2005). Simon Ochieng' argues it is better for foetuses to be aborted than be born into families too poor to care for them. Another opinion piece on social issues concerned prostitution: however, this piece examined prostitution in the West, with no mention of the Kenyan context (*Sad tale of 70-year old prostitutes*, *Nation*, May 19, 2005).

On violence, the *Nation* ran a similar editorial to the *Standard's* concerning the violent crime wave, with a mention of rape in passing. Another editorial was different, on child rape. The board applauded a High Court justice for handing down a 15-year sentence. Instead of focusing on the crime, however, the entire piece dealt with judges not deciding rape cases effectively.

Overall, it is interesting to note that the *Standard* remained consistent in articles and opinions. Meanwhile, in the *Nation*, new issues emerged in opinions and editorials, particularly women's issues, which were not covered by regular news articles.

### **Placement**

National politics make the front page far more than any other issue. Van Dijk calls this "relevance structuring," the practice of putting the most important information first. Political stories are the most relevant, followed far behind by social issues. In the *Nation*, the lead story was always a political story, while the *Standard* twice led with a health story. It is important to note that the lead story also occupies a large amount of space in inner pages as well, as the lead (in both papers) typically ran well over 1000 words.

The pattern from the front page continued inside. Despite a variety of issues seen in editorials and opinions, the Kenyan press is still undoubtedly largely about politics. In the *Nation*, of the 194 articles coded, 100 were in the Politics category, representing over half the stories (52 per cent). The *Standard* devoted about the same amount of space to Politics with 95 articles in a total of 177 (53 per cent).

The February 19 *Nation* headline is telling: *The Cabinet yesterday met for six hours with Kenya's hottest topic – corruption – the only item on the agenda*. The news theme of corruption is foremost in the Kenyan press, appearing in countless political stories and involving every section of the public sphere from water boards (*Minister warns water boards on corruption*, *Nation*, June 1, 2005) to Cabinet ministers to the Department of Defence (*State to probe DoD tenders*, *Standard*, February 8, 2005).

The implication for women of the priority given to political news is clear. Since few women are engaged in politics in Kenya, only a small number of women have the potential of making the front page.

### **Photographs**

Although the *Nation's* front-page photo was always connected to its lead story, the *Standard* showed more variety in visuals. Thus, women, at least in photos, were more likely to make the *Standard's* front page. Front-page photos in both papers took up between one-third and one-quarter of the page, and there was only one per day. Besides size, there were a number of noticeable differences between the two papers. The first is that, in the *Nation*, women appeared only twice (of the 14 sample days), compared to eight times in the *Standard*. In fact, in the *Nation*, buildings featured as often as women did.<sup>28</sup> Every *Nation* page-one photo was directly linked to the lead news story and all were about politics, with the exception of a story on the death of Pope Jean Paul II (see Tables 13 and 14 for notes on all the front-page photos). The *Standard* consistently showed more women on the front page than the *Nation*, a pattern also found by Higiroy in

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<sup>28</sup> All photos in the *Standard* were of people, and the *Nation* showed people in all but the two photos of buildings. See Annexes 5 and 6 for more details on photo distribution.

2002. However, unlike Higiro's study where the maximum number of times in one month a woman appeared on the front page was nine, the female numbers have increased for both papers, although more so for the *Standard*.

It is also important to consider the context in which women appear in front page photos. The two photos in which women appeared in the *Nation* featured lay women, first as a mourner signing the book of condolences for the Pope (her face is hidden as she is bending down), and second as civil servants protesting before a strike. In both cases, the photo did not have a caption, and the women are unnamed. Interestingly, these were the only two days without photo captions. As discussed earlier, Karega and Masinde (1997) placed great importance on naming, as this was one of the primary ways in which the paper bestowed importance on the individual.

Rita Maingi of AMWIK claims there has been an improvement in women's representation in photos. Prior to 2000, she says women would always be "looking on." Even a woman who was actually highly-placed in the organization might not be named. Now, she says, newspapers specifically say who it is, and what their position is (Maingi, May 18, 2004). But this was not found in the content analysis; women in the *Nation* were 100 per cent nameless in front-page photos.

The *Standard* showed more variety in its choice of topic for front-page photos, with a full range of politics, sports, and business. All of the non-official women in the *Standard's* photos were named, with two exceptions – a crowd shot at the Pope's funeral, and female protesters being loaded onto a police bus. Women appeared in their role as wife of a prominent figure, but also as non-governmental and governmental experts.

In the *Standard* women were photographed in two classic gendered roles – as mother and victim. Charity Ngilu appeared in her capacity as Minister of Health, along with a lead story on a strike at Kenyatta Hospital. She is pictured with a sick and bandaged child on her lap, and appears to be making faces at him, as a mother might engage her child. Although ‘kissing babies’ is a popular and even stereotypical election photo opportunity for many Canadian politicians, it is extremely unlikely a male Kenyan politician would be pictured with a stranger’s child on his lap. This photo seems to be a throwback to 2002, when Ngilu was known as ‘Mama Rainbow.’

In another story on the hospital strike, a young mother Gorreti Achieng, is shown clutching her deceased baby. Higirot’s research found that 12 per cent of female photo subjects in the *Standard* were pictured in a “sad and hopeless situation.” This was the case for Achieng. She was shown looking absolutely bewildered and about to burst into tears, as she walked toward the camera holding her dead infant in a blanket.

When it came to photo credits, seven of the *Nation* photos were credited to ‘File,’ and none were credited to a female photojournalist. The *Standard* credited three women, compared to six men. In 2000, Higirot found that there were no women on the photo staff at the *Nation* and three of 15 at the *Standard*. While the *Nation* photo department has remained an exclusively male domain, the *Standard* has improved from one fifth, to one third women photojournalists (but again with such small numbers, it is hard to draw conclusions).

While further research is warranted, the papers appear to be diverging in photo coverage of women on the front page. While the *Nation* remains steadfastly attached to leading with a political news story and photo, the *Standard* seems to be breaking the

pattern, to allow new and different types of visuals to be considered newsworthy. At the *Nation*, Higiuro argued the lack of female photojournalists there was a key factor in the paper's "dismal" photo representation of women. Time has not brought much change in this paper's photo department, as women remain invisible both in front of and behind the camera. Meanwhile, the *Standard* appears to include more coverage of women on the front page, and in more varied roles. However, the paper continues to portray women in certain rigid categories, most notably as either mother or victim.

In summary, when the front page contains not one reference to a woman, no female bylines and not one photo of a woman, what message is being sent to readers? When this pattern continues inside the newspaper as well, the message is clear – women are not newsworthy. Further, the front-page photos as well as the other news features are clear indicators of certain themes that continue throughout both papers. These are: the virtual invisibility of women in political stories (and therefore in the bulk of news stories), women appearing only in certain categories of stories, as incidental sources, as unnamed sources, and in certain pre-determined gender roles.

**Theme 1: Women do not appear in stories on politics and economics**

The Kenyan dailies contribute to the symbolic annihilation of women in acts of omission as much as commission. Women are invisible in the majority of news items. As a result of decades of opposition to the state, politics and political actors are key foci of Kenyan news discourse, to the virtual exclusion of all other topics and actors. Despite a major political upheaval and an opening up of civil society, the news frame has remained consistent since the former regime. Since women have not yet reached equal footing in politics, they do not have equal footing in the papers.

In fact, the only time women assumed ‘top billing’ in a political story, and were allowed to speak for themselves with a large number of direct or indirect quotes was as a Cabinet Minister. Health Minister Charity Ngilu and Water Minister Martha Karua together accounted for over half the female government representation in the *Nation*. When they did appear, both Karua and Ngilu received the largest number of direct quotes in the stories.

The language used to describe female cabinet ministers was, for the most part, not noticeably different from their male counterparts. However, Minister Charity Ngilu, in addition to being photographed with a child on her lap, and crying in the editorial noted above, appeared sad in a story on the public service strike (*Kenyatta hospital strike called off*, Standard, May 26, 2005). Ngilu “accused” workers and “warned that the Government would take severe action against the saboteurs.” Despite all the tough language, Ngilu was described as “tearful,” another example in which her gender comes to the foreground. Ngilu is, by all accounts the most covered woman in all of Kenya, which is not surprising for a minister with an important portfolio. Ndung’u Muchai of the

Education Centre for Women and Democracy notes that when Ngilu ran for president in 1997, the media built her profile and then undid her, focusing on negative issues about her family and lack of formal education (Muchai, May 11, 2004). Pamela Mburia of AMWIK adds that initially the media focused on Ngilu's dress etc., but "Now it's down to business" (Mburia, May 18, 2004). The examples cited above suggest this is not always the case.

As the Kenyan dailies are primarily concerned with politicians, it is to be expected that cabinet ministers appear frequently. Except for the instances with Ngilu noted above, female cabinet ministers received the same type of coverage as other politicians in their position. Female officials were given the same space (in terms of lines of quotes) as their male counterparts, physical appearance was never mentioned, or style or dress or any other such stereotypes often associated with female politicians.

The number of female government sources in the Kenyan dailies needs to be put into perspective. At present there are only three women cabinet ministers, Linah Kilimo, Charity Ngilu and Martha Karua. Although the *Nation's* 13 female government sources compared to 206 male government sources seems terribly small, it should be noted that this represents only a slightly smaller fraction than women's representation in government as a whole (with, for example, 18 female MPs out of 222). The *Standard* with five female government sources compared to 101 male, is somewhat more disproportional.

In business and economics, the only female source in the *Standard* was in a story on media expansion. Polly Renton, the chief executive officer of Medeva, a content provider, was allotted three lines of direct quotes (*KTN to launch audience-based talk*

*show*, Standard, March 4, 2005), which accounted for the only woman named in stories on business, economics and finance. *Standard* reporters may have interviewed more women, but it is impossible to know because lay people remain unnamed. Unnamed citizens were featured in a number of stories relating to food production – they were twice “farmers” (*Electoral Commission should handle sugar polls, MP says*, Standard, April 25, 2005 and *Minister orders arrest of farmers hawking coffee*, Standard, April 5, 2005), “herdsmen” (*Maasai, ranchers to share resources*, Standard, June 1, 2005) and “ranchers” (*Minister steps into Mara row*, Standard, March 11, 2005). In a story on a new newspaper pull-out, they were “vendors” (*‘Coast Today’ an instant hit in Mombasa*, Standard, March 4, 2005).

As was discussed in Chapter 2, women are the major contributors to food production in the country. Wambui Kanji, of Collaborative Centre for Women and Democracy, says the newspapers are notorious for lack of coverage of women’s contribution to national development. When focusing on the economy, she says, “We don’t see what women do,” particularly in the informal sector, in work such as herding or hawking. “When you focus only on paid labour, you’re missing what women contribute,” Kanji says (Kanji, May 19, 2004).

## **Theme 2: Women appear in human interest stories and stories on violence**

As Gallagher noted in her checklist concerning the ‘overall patterns of gender representation’, women appear in stories in only a limited number of subject areas (primarily in stories on violence). On the whole, women were not particularly more present in stories on social issues than they were on political and economic issues (see

source breakdown by category in Tables 3 and 9). Women did appear in stories about the New York women's conference, human interest and sensational stories, and violence stories.

With so much attention paid to politics, there is little space in the newspapers for anything else. Eliud Shireichi Nabo, the Project Development Manager at the Foundation for Gender and Equality, says, "Media concentrate on political issues at the expense of human development issues... Today the newspapers which circulate country-wide, the *East African Standard* and the *Nation*, virtually every page you see is about politics" (Nabo, May 19, 2004).

As a corollary to the emphasis on politics, the newsframe remains decidedly urban. Meanwhile, social issues in the rural domain are given scant attention despite the fact that the majority of the country's population still lives in the rural areas.<sup>29</sup> The Kenyan dailies follow an international trend noted in the *Global Media Monitoring Project*.

Not surprisingly, women also appeared in two *Standard* stories on women's rights. These were classic event-based stories on the Beijing + 10 conference. It is interesting to note that the *Standard* devoted significant word counts to the women's conference in its news pages, on at least two separate days, while the *Nation* did not cover the story at all. On March 4, 2005 the *Standard* reported that the Minister for Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services, Ochilo Ayacko, reaffirmed the government's commitment to implement the Beijing Platform (*Discrimination banned in Kenya*, *Standard*, March 4, 2005). The minister was speaking at the Beijing+10

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<sup>29</sup> Sixty-one per cent of Kenya's population live in rural areas, according to data for 2003 (Nationmaster, web).

conference in New York and both conference stories had female bylines – Gladys Kemunto and Jane Godia, respectively. This coverage suggests women’s conferences are indeed newsworthy for the *Standard*.

The category ‘violence against women’ had the most female lay sources, three in each paper. Although this was more than other issues, it was still low given the subject matter. The *Nation* also had three female government figures, and three female non-governmental experts, while the *Standard* had one female government figure and two non-governmental experts.

Women appeared frequently in, and were the subjects of, a number of human interest stories. These differed from other news stories in that they had a soft news lead, and focused primarily on one person. For example, in one of the few ‘good news’ stories in the sample, Beatrice Obwocha writes about a program for teenage mothers in the slums (*Promise of a new day for teenage mothers*, *Standard*, February 8, 2005). The story profiled Stella Amojong, the founder of a small NGO: Advocates for Teenage Mothers. It appears this is meant to be one of the paper’s signature ‘uplifting’ stories, and is written in a magazine style more similar to the special pull-out sections of the paper than it is to other news stories. The message is clearly ‘look how far a girl from the slums can go.’ This feature was unusual because it showed a young woman in a position of influence.

One of the stories with the most female voices in the sample was an unusual one. Students accused a girl and her friend of being devil worshippers (*Girl kicked out of school over devil worship claims*, *Standard*, May 21, 2005). The student, Diana Achola, explained her situation. The watchman, headmistress, father and stepmother all weighed in and were directly quoted. Achola was very nearly the victim of mob justice after it was

decided by some other students that she and a friend were witches. The child is portrayed as a victim of unusual circumstances but there was no indication in the story that Achola's case was part of a larger pattern. In fact, the most pressing news value that might have been associated with this story was that it was unusual.

In another usual story that was covered by both papers, the mother of a Kenyan woman convicted of operating a call girl service in the U.K. defends her daughter. Although both stories featured the same sources, the *Standard* featured a far more sensational headline and lead: "Sex queen's mother speaks out." The lead called the brothel a "multi-million shilling sex empire" (*Sex queen's mother speaks out*, *Standard*, June 1, 2005). This compared to "My girl doesn't run brothels, says mother" in the *Nation* (*My girl doesn't run brothels, says mother*, *Nation*, June 1, 2005). The *Standard* quoted the mother, while the *Nation* expanded to include a brother and the woman in question. Interestingly, these 'scandal' stories were relatively long (*Standard*: 614 words and *Nation*: 910 words). In addition, these two stories featured the most direct quotes from lay people in all categories, and were two of the few instances of lay women being named.

In short, with the exception of violence stories, women are more likely to appear in human interest and sensational stories than they are in regular news items, unless this news is specifically about a women's event. However, on social issues where women are equally and perhaps more affected, they are as invisible as they were in political and economic news.

### **Theme 3: Women appear as incidental sources**

With the exceptions of stories involving cabinet ministers, violence, and human interest, both dailies followed the same pattern of sourcing women largely in an incidental fashion. In other words, women were not the central sources setting the tone of the story. Women were often paraphrased in passing (two or three lines buried in the story), even when they appeared as high-level experts. For example, as was the case with Chief Executive Officer Polly Renton, women are accorded only a few lines, often paraphrased and at the end of the story. Gladwell Otieno appeared in her capacity as Executive Director of Transparency International to defend her organization against government accusations. Otieno got four lines, a small amount compared to the four male government sources who also appeared in the story (*Govt: Transparency International lied about Sh750m*, Standard, March 23, 2005).

In the only political news item to feature a female lay person in the *Nation*, Agnes Killu appeared at the bottom of a story representing 30,000 fellow slum dwellers. She was accorded only the last two lines, and paraphrased. This is a pattern found for other ordinary citizens as well. In five instances in each paper in the Politics category, lay people appeared as unknowns, for example as “church members” (*Moi in bid to reconcile church leaders*, Nation, April 7, 2005) or “women and youth representatives” (*Forum calls for law to stop debt repayment*, Nation, May 19, 2005), and “hawkers” (*City Hall may bar hawkers*, Nation, May 21, 2005). In the first cases, the lay people were allotted two paraphrased lines; in the third, the last line of the story was the following partial direct quote, “However, hawkers immediately dismissed the decision as a tactic aimed at “seeking sympathy of fake hawkers.”” In the *Nation*’s six stories on general poverty, no

women were quoted but unknown lay people appeared in two stories, as “traders” (*Food appeal as hunger hits Garissa*, Nation, May 19, 2005), or “a trader” (*Refugees swarm Eastleigh and rents skyrocket*, Nation, May 19, 2005). In both cases, they were paraphrased for two lines at the end of the story. In a pyramid-style news brief, this is the lowest possible position for a source to hold.

The importance of unnamed lay sources to this particular story is that this category is likely to be disproportionately female, as women are more likely to be involved in this informal economy as traders than their male counterparts.

In the *Standard's* stories on education, unnamed sources appeared five times, as “students,” “parents,” and “secondary school heads.” In fact, students were only named in two of these stories. One of these cases was a story about the Government introducing a mobile school that would reach students who were otherwise kept out, because their parents needed help herding animals (*Mobile schools bring new hope in NEP*, Standard, March 23, 2005). The story comes from North East Province, both the most impoverished region of the country, and the one that typically receives the least media coverage. This story also provided more background than is usual in a news story, including statistics on enrolment in the province and details on the United Nations Millenium Development Goals. But the girl who appears in both the lead and the story’s closing sentence was not quoted directly, although she was named. Her father, however, was both named and quoted.

**Theme 4: Women appear primarily in pre-determined roles as victims and mothers**

In the mobile school story, Marian Matthews was portrayed in a positive light, receiving an education for the first time. Far more common, as in the case of the devil worship story, was for women and girls to be portrayed as victims. The *Global Media Monitoring Project* (2000) also found that ordinary women appeared most often as victims of violence.

In a domestic violence story, President Kibaki's niece, Stella Njeri Kibaki, was stabbed in the throat by a former boyfriend (*Emotional send-off for Kibaki niece*, Standard, February 28, 2005). In another domestic violence story, Grace Wangui Maina lost her infant child to an abusive husband (*Women recalls attack that left her baby dead*, Nation, April 4, 2005). In this case, the victim, Grace Maina, was directly quoted at length in the story.

In a 1068-word feature on female genital mutilation, the word 'agony' in the lead is foreboding (*Agony of a child-bride mutilated by circumciser's knife*, Standard, March 11, 2005). The word choice is extremely graphic. Details of the botched surgery, painful sexual encounters, and sheer trauma are played out in morbid detail. The reporter writes, "She underwent infibulation where her entire external genitalia was excised and stitched together, leading to the narrowing of her vaginal opening." The use of extreme detail is effective in conveying the horror of this practice. In the last paragraph the reader learns 15-year-old Amidah Adan's case is not unique. "Records at Isiolo District Hospital indicate that an average of 120 girls seek specialized treatment annually after being subjected to FGM."

Similarly, the *Nation* ran two stories on child brides. In one case, much as in the circumcision story above, one girl's plight is taken as an example of many. The girl is described in the lead as having "wept uncontrollably" because, she said, her father had taken her out of school and was planning on having her circumcised and "married off." The second story was about another young girl, this one with a name reported – Sarah Mombi Kinaiya – who was also about to be married off, at age 12, and she too denied an education by her father.

Another example of victimhood concerned the gendered implications of ethnic clashes (*Njembs flee homes as raids intensify*, Standard, April 7, 2005), or what in the Beijing Platform was referred to as "women in conflict." Members of the Njembs community were fleeing their homes after fighting broke out with their Pokot neighbours. Councillor Agnes Tamar said the most affected were women and children. "Some women have given birth in the bush, while others have miscarried after days of trekking and hunger," said Tamar. It is interesting that Tamar, as the only female councilor, was given top billing.

Girls and women appeared most frequently as victims, possibly because stories of violence are specifically emphasized by newspapers. According to *Nation* reporter Mwangi Gitahu, over the first two and half months of 2005, hardly a day went by without a media report about rape or other forms of sexual violence, and many victims were babies (*MP's campaign to stem tide of sexual offences*, Nation, March 13, 2005). The article said more than 32 sexual violence cases were reported during this period. These numbers would correspond to about one story every two to three days, approximately the same numbers found in this study.

Another role women commonly held was that of ‘mother.’ As was suggested in the front-page photo of Minister Ngilu with the small child, this was not a role reserved for nonprofessional women. More often, however, women appeared as mothers and victims in the same story. For example, Achieng clutching her dead baby on the front-page, Maina losing her infant to an abusive husband, or Njembs women giving birth in the bush while fleeing their Pokot neighbours. Women were also found repeatedly as mothers in relation to abuses on their daughters. Women were concerned about rape in schools (*Parents discover defilers’ den*, Standard, February 19, 2005), or comforted their daughters after FGM (as in the ‘circumciser’s knife’ above).

Margaret Gallagher noted the natural association in the media of women with victimhood and motherhood. In the victim role, the newspapers are reinforcing a view that women are not ‘doing’, but rather ‘having things done’ to them. In parallel, news reinforces societal divides between the public and private spheres. It is clear that men maintain the places of power within Kenyan society. While women sometimes appeared in high-level professional positions, as heads of hospitals, directors of NGOs, these female experts were rare exceptions. Thus, news being concerned with the public sphere, remains a male domain.

Overall, the dailies were remarkably similar with a couple of key differences. The *Standard* seems to be making a concerted effort to feature more women – on the front page, and as sources. It is slowly shifting the news discourse to be inclusive of different issues; while politics maintain the place of prominence, the adaptation allows space for the inclusion of social issues. But in widening its scope, the *Standard* also showed an occasional leaning toward sensational headlines and stories.

As for the importance of the journalist's gender, this study reaches the same conclusions as Van Zoonen and Liebler and Smith: the sex of the journalist makes little difference when it comes to gender sensitivity. Although it is hard to pass judgment because of the relative rarity of female bylines, it is fairly safe to say that women and men journalists write in similar patterns, both contributing to the symbolic annihilation of women in the Kenyan press.

### **Special sections**

In the past 10 years, partially in an effort to attract female readers who were not seeing themselves in regular news pages, the Kenyan dailies have introduced a vast array of pull-outs and special sections on sports, entertainment, and lifestyle. Ndung'u Muchai of the Education Centre for Women and Democracy, says the issues covered in these special sections are "disappointing" (Muchai, May 11, 2004). A typical section will feature such issues as 'how to keep a relationship,' 'how to lure your man,' and 'how to keep a man from cheating.' Muthoni Wanyieki of the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) says these special sections reflect the traditional idea of what women's sections in the paper should contain: beauty, weight loss tips, love, romance, etc. "They're playing into advertising market research as well," she says. "And that's been one of the struggles... That's not what gender is about." Wanyieki says the papers are trying to attract a female readership (Wanyieki, May 13, 2004).

Charles Onyango-Obbo writes in the *East African*:

Many journalists and media managers seem to have made the assumption that serious journalism doesn't sell. That the only way the media can make money is through attracting younger people, and women. No problem. The

beef is with their conviction that young people and women are idiots who are only interested in light fluff, fashion, and stories of pop stars and photos of celebrities with bare breasts adorned with rings (Charles Onyango-Obbo, *Sorry, We Media Types Think You're Idiots... East African*, May 10-16, 2004).

This quote is especially surprising given that Onyango-Obbo is a managing editor at the Nation Media Group. He says papers that had sections based on strong public-affairs reporting, that attempted to treat the important political and social issues of the day in some depth, have since watered them down or scrapped them entirely. Onyango-Obbo says women will read politics if it is reported without the “crass masculinity and conflict-laden hysteria” with which it tends to be presented.

Perhaps women are not reading the paper because, as was discussed above, they simply don't see themselves in its pages. Wanyieki says women's portrayal in the media has not changed as significantly as the opening up of the media itself. She notes what little change there has been (since the advent of multi-party politics)

is probably not due to the media houses themselves, but due to the influence of women's organizations on the media, and increasing use of the media, because during the same period a whole range of newer, very autonomous and independent women's organizations sprung up and started working in partnership with the few women that are in the media around getting issues covered (Wanyieki, May 13, 2004).

Wanyieki says any change in coverage has been the result of women within the media who've been pushing issues and collaborating with women's organizations to get new content in. For example, starting in 1995 (when Kenya began participating in the yearly international 16 days of activism against violence against women) the papers also began partnering on a yearly basis with women's organizations for the campaign period. Also in 1996, the *Nation* for one whole year ran a weekly section on violence against

women, which covered issues and statistics. Lucy Oriang' was Deputy Managing Editor of the *Nation* at the time. She threatened to resign if the paper did not give her a full page to cover violence. Prior to that, violence stories were typically given one paragraph. Wanyieki says that's how women's issues (mostly violence) have entered the papers more. Due to work done by local organizations, the media are now covering female genital mutilation (FGM) (Wanyieki, May 13, 2004).

Activists say the prominence of violence stories has changed dramatically in the last five years. Myra Karani, a journalist working for the Coalition on Violence against Women (COVAW), says the dailies are improving. "At least per day, there is an issue on women, gender-based violence that will be covered. They really are improving." She continues, "Long time ago, most of the articles, used to appear as a very small portion, on the corner or in the middle. But now they are improving. An article on violence can even be on the front page. At least now they are trying to give it more weight, unlike the way they used to report a long time ago" (Karani, May 14, 2004). Karani notes the change has been most visible since 2001 or 2002, although she admits most of the coverage is Nairobi-based and still weak in rural areas. Anne Ngugi, chairperson of the Women's Rights Awareness Programme (WRAP), agrees. Ngugi says, since 2001 "there has been a dramatic increase in the number of articles in the dailies on all forms of violence against women and children." Journalists, she says, are more interested and have absorbed an awareness created by women's rights organisations. More violence stories leads to increased activity and more awareness in local communities (Ngugi, May 20, 2004).

“It has mobilized everybody. The police are more active, the communities are more active, the administration is more active, the church is more active, people have been very active. They want to be seen to be doing something,” Ngugi says.

Wanyieki also notes that all media generally do a special edition or programme on or around International Women’s Day in March. The *Nation’s* Women’s Day Special in 2004 was 32 pages long. Rosemary Okello-Orlale of the African Woman and Child Features Service (AWC) says of the pull-out they do every March with the *Nation*, that the first time the editor said, “I’m not interested.” In 1999, AWC wrote all the stories; by the next year the newspaper’s journalists started writing them. Since then the special has become almost a signature product for the paper. In 2004 (the first time it ran at 32 pages), it brought in millions of shillings. Okello-Orlale says the *Nation* was trying to “brand women’s issues” (Okello-Orlale, May 23, 2004).

The problem, of course, is that International Women’s Day is not every day. Mainstreaming gender does not come in the form of pull-out or special sections. But Okello-Orlale says activists must “take advantage of the day. If we can do it effectively for March 8, we can do it successfully for 365 days per year.” Wanyieki is also optimistic; she says these other kind of supplements (violence against women as opposed to beauty and fashion) shows that newspapers are moving in the right direction (Wanyieki, May 13, 2004).

Women’s organizations also occasionally buy an entire page or group of pages to highlight certain issues. These pages, bought by FIDA, COVAW, and other groups, address new bills being considered in Parliament, new national initiatives by the groups, or new programmes under way.

The *Standard's* Saturday *Style & Substance* magazine advertises itself as: “At last, a women’s magazine that features more than just face cleansers and soap stars. Like the title suggests, Style and Substance includes articles and comment on everything from beauty and fashion to more weighty matters like career and the role of women in today’s society” (full-page ad, *Standard*, January 30, 2004).

Pamella Makotsi-Sittoni, current Managing Editor of the *Standard*, defends the special section. She says, “We made a deliberate attempt to make it a woman’s read. And when we sat down to plan it, I was so glad that I was part of that decision-making process because initially the thought was let’s just do a magazine about style, and living well and shopping but I said no – we must have a sense of purpose.” Every issue of the section features an article about an inspirational woman. Hence, she says, the “and Substance” (Makotsi-Sittoni, June 4, 2004). Every month the section also crowns a ‘hero of the month,’ who also has to be a woman. “The women, they may not be corporate executives, but they are doing something for the community that is making a difference, and it doesn’t have to be big. We need to bring them out and talk about their achievements. This one forum in a month, I don’t think it’s enough,” Makotsi-Sittoni admits, but she says it’s better than at the *Nation*, where their magazine has few inspirational pieces. “We thought that was something that was lacking in Kenyan journalism.”

Jane Godia, a sub-editor at the *Standard*, says women who would otherwise not buy the paper are buying it for that day (Godia, May 31, 2004). The result is indeed a strange mix: A spread on what to wear to bed – torn t-shirt or sexy lingerie – is placed

next to profiles of women working in the slums, with orphans, with people with HIV/AIDS or in drought-stricken areas.

The main advantage to pull-outs is one of space. In a feature article, the writer has more leeway in terms of space and style, than in the standard news bulletin. Feature articles provide more room for an informative and broad-based context for the news report to be understood. But there are two major points precluding the supposition that feature articles necessarily need to be in special sections. For one, many lead stories were in the feature style. Secondly, the *Standard* has already begun to pull feature articles out of the special sections and place them in news.

Okello-Orlale, the original instigator of the Women's Day special, says, "Women's issues have been segmented through the inserts. The whole idea of our organization is trying to mainstream women's issues. My experience with the mainstream media was 'We've got a women's page anyway, why do you want to mainstream?'... By having these pull-outs or inserts, it's not going to help women. When you talk of gender mainstreaming in the media, it's from the word go" (Okello-Orlale, May 23, 2004).

Rita Maingi of the Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK) agrees. "Women's issues are relegated to the back pages of the newspapers," she says. "In our country, what is given preference most is politics. Sometimes I wonder – who really is interested in politics? We're not touching on the issues that are affecting people, and that's one of the reasons, I would say we're not developed. Because we don't tackle issues, we just write stories because they will sell" (Maingi, May 18, 2004). She says the *Standard* used to excel at highlighting issues and focusing on human-interest stories. Not any more, she notes, since the new management team took over. Maingi's co-worker,

Pamela Mburia, says the association wants to see real life stories. The strugglers: life stories of people who mean a lot to us. “What about my mother? She has a big story. The village woman, she has accomplished so much for the people in her local community,” Mburia says, adding more people would buy the paper, if their stories were being told (Mburia, May 18, 2004).

But Godia says management does not approve of human interest stories. “They don’t look at human interest the way I would look at human interest... You want to put something on the front page... You feel this is really good, it’s relevant. But somebody will say – no, no, no put politics. Lead with a political story.” Godia says her planned lead stories quickly become smaller stories. It’s a constant battle with the paper’s news values. “They believe that any time they put a story that is not politics, the paper does not sell,” she says (Godia, May 31, 2004).

“I think it’s the way they’ve cultured the readership. If you culture the readership that you’re going to be giving them political scandals every day, that’s what they expect from you and when you put something different, they’ll say that this is not you. Maybe if it was in another paper, they would have bought it,” Godia says.

Makotsi-Sittoni says that according to research conducted by Steadman Research Ltd. on behalf of the paper, consumers buy the paper to read about politics; very few buy it to read about business (Makotsi-Sittoni, June 4, 2004). She once tried a headline news item on test tube babies, but sales dropped dramatically. She says the paper has put a lot of money into the magazines (the pull-outs), but wonders if they’re having any impact. She says the only one which had any major impact on sales has been *Pulse* (the youth magazine featuring local celebrities). The *Standard*’s editorial staff say it is not only

politics that sells papers, but specifically political fighting. For the two months that Kibaki declared a truce- no more fighting, no rallies – the sales dropped.

Makotsi-Sittoni says she is disappointed with the direction the paper is taking “When we first came to the *Standard*, we thought we were going to do a really different paper, and put a human face to the paper.”

In short, the papers are consumed by politics, because politics sell papers. Politics sell papers because audiences, after years of seeing the same type of coverage, have become accustomed to a particular news frame. Women are not involved in politics to the same degree and they do not appear in that frame. In an attempt to rectify the lack of women, the two dailies have built special women’s sections but have been in conflict with women’s organizations over what to emphasize in these special sections: style or substance.

## CHAPTER 4: MEDIA WOMEN IN KENYA

“Mainstreaming gender is not just in the content, it’s also in the personnel.” – Rosemary Okello-Orlale, Executive Director, African Woman and Child Feature Service (AWC) (Okello-Orlale, May 23, 2004).

Since the beginnings of multi-partyism in the 1990s, civil society in Kenya, including the media, has expanded and become relatively more independent. But the media industry is still very much a male-dominated domain. The Association of Media Women (AMWIK) is a national media association whose overall concern is to promote the professional interests of women in the media and to use the skills of members to address the concerns of women in the society. “The idea is to bring media women together, for us to tackle issues that concern women, and possibly try and improve the coverage of women in the media,” says Rita Maingi, a programme assistant with AMWIK and a former print journalist (Maingi, May 18, 2004).

The organization represents nearly 300 women journalists, a significant number of the female media staffers in the country.<sup>30</sup> In 2000, available research suggested that women accounted for less than 20 per cent of all professional journalists in the country (Kamweru, 74). Maingi says there are quite a number of women in television and radio at the lower levels. Meanwhile, experts estimate that far less than 50 per cent of print journalists are women, and at the editorial level, only one in four editors or columnists are women. But, she says, the numbers are slowly growing. Okello-Orlale concurs. “They

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<sup>30</sup> Even the government is unsure of how many female journalists there are in the country. “The major challenge is lack of gender-disaggregated data from media houses. It is therefore still difficult to assess the number of women employed in decision-making positions in the area.” (Republic of Kenya, 15)

are 50 / 50 but they are not where it matters. Most of them [young women] get in to journalism to be presenters. They're not in print," she says. Okello-Orlale says at the *Nation*, 60 per cent of reporters are men, but the women who are there are low in the hierarchy. "They are covering off beats, they are not specialized journalists" (Okello-Orlale, May 23, 2004). This confirms the suspicion raised in the previous chapter that the few women in the newsroom are writing under the nameless "Nation Team" byline.

As was first addressed in Chapter 1, it's a widely-debated issue whether the sex of a reporter has any bearing on gender-sensitivity of the coverage. The consensus among gender experts in Kenya is that at the staffing level of reporter, both sexes exhibit gender blindness. At the editorial level, however, having women in key newsroom positions is a high priority, as they are the ones who pick the stories. Nevertheless, in order for women to advance to the editorial level, there need to be women at the lower levels.

### **Challenges of promotion**

The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) Executive Director Lynne Muthoni Wanyieki says the few women who are in the newsroom are streamed into "pretty stereotypical kinds of beats. They don't get the political beats, which are the ones that help you move up to analysis or a column." Instead, she says, women are assigned to cover social issues such as health or education, which, as established in the previous chapter, occupy far less space and importance in the daily news. Further, when women are assigned to cover politics they do not always get the same space as their male counterparts. Jane Godia, chief sub-editor of the *Sunday*

*Standard*, says, “In the Standard newsroom, it took quite a while for them to get women covering Parliament, High Court. You find they’ll be assigned small, small stories” (Godia, May 31, 2004). The much-touted exception for Kenyan women covering politics is the *Nation*’s chief parliamentary reporter, Njeri Ruganda, but she seems to be alone; the *Standard* doesn’t have a woman specifically assigned to Parliament.

### **Lack of a gender policy**

Another problem for women in the newsroom is that neither of the two major newspaper has a gender equity policy.

“You have to start with a written policy. There must be a reference point that all understand and can be tracked. The rules must be clear,” says Lucy Oriang’, former Deputy Managing Editor at the *Nation* (quoted in Gender Links, 49). Although non-governmental organizations (AMWIK and the AWC) have produced draft gender guidelines, the documents haven’t really been taken up by the media houses themselves. One example is the lack of any policy for maternity leave. Tourism and Information Minister Raphael Tuju said in May 2004 that there was a need for media owners to improve the working environment for female journalists. In particular, he said, three weeks maternity leave is too short (Evelyn Kwamboka, *New fund for women journalists*, *Standard*, May 2, 2004). In an interview, AMWIK coordinator Pamela Mburia, pointed to her pregnant colleague and former *Nation* journalist, Rita Maingi: “Take Rita now. If there were something coming up, the editor would not pick her to go to do a story in

Eritrea or Mombasa. He would rather send the man who is not pregnant like her. Her chances for moving up are limited” (Mburia, May 18, 2004).

In the same interview, Minister Tuju said the newsroom was “harsh” for women. Another leading media expert, Dr. Wambui Kiai, director of the School of Journalism at the University of Nairobi, uses the same term. “It’s quite harsh – and it’s harsh for all journalists. It’s harsh for men, and it’s even harsher for women,” Kiai says (Kiai, May 27, 2004). “They’ll tell you as women in the press it’s really tough to survive within that male-dominated space. There’s now some acknowledgment even from managing editors that they need more women.” Despite the difficult conditions, some female journalists have managed to do quite well. Godia admits the working conditions are challenging. Even the pre-requisite late hours have a gendered implication in a high-crime city such as Nairobi. Many women, in all professions, are hesitant to go home alone at night. Driving alone is particularly dangerous (Godia, May 31, 2004).

“The whole culture of the media is very, very male. They’re out late. They drink like fishes (sic); many women, particularly once they’re married, simply can’t do that,” Wanyieki says (Wanyieki, May 13, 2004). She says women who are not around the drinking table don’t get promoted when jobs do open up. Okello-Orlale also mentions the drinking culture to explain challenges for media women (Okello-Orlale, May 23, 2004). Tom Mshindi (managing director of the *Standard*) goes to drink with all the editors, where, she says, they make their decisions for the next day. “So the female editors that are there [in the newsroom], they just get directives. They are not part of the decision-making.”

### **Advancing to editor positions**

Despite the country having very few women columnists and editors, the situation is by all accounts improving. “If you actually look at numbers, it’s still not so good – at those levels, at the level of columnists or analysis, or at the level of management – but it’s better definitely than it was before,” Wanyieki says (Wanyieki, May 13, 2004).

One of the interesting things about media women in Kenya is that the ‘firsts’ (as Tuchman called them) do make a point of representing the movement in general. Godia, who has been in her chief sub-editor position at *Standard* since October 2003, emphasizes the importance of female role models in the newsroom to mentor new arrivals.

“I know it’s not easy, particularly as a woman. When I joined the *Standard*, my boss was a woman. She was the managing editor of the *Sunday Standard*, and she’s the only one so far. When she was there it was ok, she was encouraging, she was neutral. When it come to working with men... It has not been easy,” Godia says (Godia, May 31, 2004).

The ‘boss’ in question was Esther Kamweru, now a professor at the Institute of Social Communication of Tangaza College. Kamweru was the first female managing editor of a Kenyan newspaper (the first woman to head a national mainstream newspaper in Kenya). Today, she is also executive director of the Media Council.

What is clear from talking to media women and media organizations in the country is a sense of ‘local heroes.’ Women who have advanced in the print press are role models to newcomers and colleagues, and are well known (on a first-name basis) to

others in the field. Promotions for women are cheered, even if it's for the competing paper. Okello-Orlale says that at the *Nation* ten years ago, the highest female editor was a deputy sub-editor. As of late 2004, the Saturday editor was a woman, as were the managing editors of magazines, the Young Nation sub-section, and the Features editor. Notably, however, none of these positions dealt with daily front-page or even front-section news.

Pamella Makotsi-Sittoni at the *Standard* is the woman who arguably holds the most senior position in the Kenyan press. In February 2005, she was promoted to Managing Editor of the daily paper. Makotsi-Sittoni says it has been a rough climb up the ladder. "I was the chief sub-editor at the *Nation*, which was quite a senior job. When I was appointed deputy managing editor, there was a lot of questions being asked about where? How? Which I found very sad, because they didn't ask the same of my male colleagues" (Makotsi-Sittoni, June 4, 2004).

In 2004, as deputy managing editor, she sat as the only woman with eight to ten men in the morning editorial meeting every day. She says it was a constant struggle for control over content. In May of that year, an abortion scandal erupted when a large number of fetuses were found in garbage bags in the Nairobi River. Makotsi-Sittoni recalls her immediate boss Managing Editor Mutuma Mathiu, saying he was going to write a comment, as the newspaper's official editorial, calling abortion 'murder.' She argued his personal opinion should not be the newspaper's official position on abortion. In the end, she says she managed to "bring down those tempers a bit," and moderate the newspaper's position. Nevertheless, the paper still ran a very sensational headline: "Baby killers." She says she did what she could within that situation, but if there had been five

women in that meeting, one asks whether there would have been a different front-page headline.

In pushing for a pro-choice stance on the abortion issues, Makotsi-Sittoni was walking a very fine line. First, abortion is rarely the stuff of news. Esther Kamweru, when she was managing the *Sunday Standard*, often disagreed with her colleagues over gender issues as well. She explains that her choices were questioned in a

subtle way, and sometimes not in such a subtle way. For example, media managers, my colleagues would be complaining that the *Sunday Standard* has become too “woman,” it’s supposed to be a mass-circulation weekly and yet we are just carrying women’s stories. So I ask, “What are women’s stories?” And they say, for example, if you have stories to do with abortion, or if you have stories to do with family, or relationships. They think these are women’s issues. So you’ll find a lot of them complaining. They don’t want you to carry that kind of story. So I found myself encountering that kind of criticism. And people asking you to change (Kamweru, May 31, 2004).

In her presentation to the Gender Links handbook workshop, Lucy Oriang’, former deputy managing editor of the *Nation*, described how she fought and won an editorial battle to get a story on the eviction of two children, aged 2 and 16, from a shack after their sick mother had died, onto the front page of the newspaper. While the sixteen-year old boy was in hospital with the baby, their mother died. She had rent arrears, and the landlord immediately moved to lock up the house, also locking out the children. Placing the story on the front page prompted a public outcry and unprecedented focus on gender, housing, poverty and children’s rights (Gender Links, 99).

Oriang’ is well-known to Kenyan readers as a staunch advocate of women’s rights. She is now the *Nation*’s managing editor for magazines, and a frequent op-ed contributor. Highlighting women’s issues in columns has been one of Oriang’’s trademarks. For example, between February 13 and June 4, 2004, her weekly opinion

column dealt almost exclusively with women's issues. She covered abortion (twice), working women in the export processing zones, women in politics (three times), adultery, women in sports, rape, Maendeleo, and sexual harassment.

Participants in a media workshop in Southern Africa felt that the existing status quo in most newsrooms in their region – where editorial content is male-dominated – gender columns are a stepping stone toward positive gender coverage. Caution, however, was raised that those doing these columns should avoid presenting gender as a women's topic (Lopi, 41). Unfortunately, this seems to be the case for Oriang' who admits her column is unusual. She writes, "I rarely venture into the choppy waters of Kenyan politics" (*Mama Rainbow, this is just not you*, Nation, March 19, 2004). While it is true that Oriang' covers issues rarely seen elsewhere in the News and Commentary sections of the paper, she might be pigeon-holing herself. Is it not another form of segregation for women's columnists to only write about women's issues? In her weekly column on January 26, 2004, Betty Caplan addressed the challenges of being a woman columnist. She writes, "As a female writer and a feminist (the two are by no means co-terminous) I believe it is important to highlight women's issues but not in any knee-jerk, automatic way" (Betty Caplan, *The challenges of a columnist*, Nation, Jan 26, 2004).

Despite evidence to the contrary, analysts say it's no longer only women considering women's issues. Kiai says other editors are better than they were 10 years ago. "They would laugh at stories on women. They would even say – 'Women's issues don't make news. Tell us what stories on women we can put on the front page.'" And, she says, it takes time. "Sometimes you wonder – three years down the line- you've done all this work on gender, you've done all this training on gender and it doesn't seem to

show. But now we can see – they [the editors]’re conscious [of gender concerns]” (Kiai, May 27, 2004).

Wanyieki agrees it is still a challenge to get women’s issues covered, but says it is more of a challenge to get reporters, columnists, and their editors to understand what gender is and how it can be incorporated in the regular news cycle (Wanyieki, May 13, 2004).

### **Training editors on gender sensitivity**

AMWIK regularly organizes gender-sensitivity training sessions with media managers and editors. Activists say training on gender issues is necessary because the whole concept of gender is lost on many editors. “They think that this is just another woman’s issue,” Mburia says (Mburia, May 18, 2004). Kiai adds, “Gender itself is not that well understood in the mainstream press. There’s a sort of tokenism. You get things on women” (Kiai, May 27, 2004).

Godia agrees: “I believe all editors should be taken for training on gender. So that they can understand what it is. Most people look at gender and they say ‘That is women’s stuff.’ But if my editor would understand what gender is, that’s how he’s going to make the rest of the country know, and the readers know, what gender is all about” (Godia, May 31, 2004).

It’s not only the men going for training as lack of gender-sensitivity cuts across the sex divide. Indeed, as Mburia notes, “Being a woman journalist does not necessarily mean that one is gender-sensitive.” She continues, “We’ve seen it. Women journalists

have disempowered women in their reporting, rather than empower them.” Mburia cites an example: After the December 2002 elections, a woman journalist interviewed a woman parliamentarian for a profile. In the article, the journalist wrote that the politician had once been a ‘househelp.’ In actual fact, she had come from a rural home to live in Nairobi, and having been an elder child, she was helping with the younger children. Mburia says the ‘househelp’ comment disempowered the politician early in her career, as people started seeing her as little more than a servant. The detail did not add any value to that story, nor was it essential (Mburia, May 18, 2004).

### **Gender courses in journalism school**

Most activists agree that for greater gender-sensitivity among journalists, there needs to be some sort of change in the curriculum of training institutions. AMWIK is working on getting all journalism schools to have a gender component in their program. Dr. Kiai notes that there’s one gender course in the journalism program at the University of Nairobi at the master’s level. The elective, she says, has been very popular with both male and female students. Ironically, the gender course is categorized under the umbrella “emerging issues,” along with other long-standing issues in the country such as ethnic violence (Kiai, May 27, 2004). As of 2004, Kiai was the only professor with a specialty in gender issues. She says she would like to see gender expand beyond one elective, “AWC wants to see gender not just in one course, but to see gender integrated in all courses. Obviously, I would do that if, I’m teaching conflict. I always do have a gender

component and we try and encourage other professors to do the same. Some of the male lecturers actually do think of gender.

“You can cover gender in news writing, you can cover gender in research methods, you can cover gender in all that. That would need a more strategic approach,” Kiai says.

The journalism school is undergoing a curriculum overhaul, which, Kiai says, “would give us some room to maybe integrate gender in some of the other courses. In academia still here, it’s tough. Even those doing their PhD in gender-related issues have a tough time.” Some professors, she says, don’t see gender as an emerging discipline or an area in academia; they think it is activism.

Myra Karani, a journalist working for the Coalition on Violence against Women (COVAW) says she got most of her gender training at the non-governmental organization, since there were no specialized courses in gender during her journalism training at Daystar University (Karani, May 14, 2004). Likewise, at the United States International University (USIU) Bachelor program, none of the courses specifically address gender. At the state-run Kenya Institute of Mass Communication (KIMC), Director Isabella Nyamwamu says there are no gender courses and none of the professors specialize in gender issues (Nyamwamu, May 26, 2004). However, the course-list for the three-year course in journalism includes “Gender politics in the media” (Ambani and Waweru, 226).

At the newly-founded East Africa School of Journalism (EASJ)<sup>31</sup>, there aren’t any experts in gender, or gender courses, but Director Roy Gachuhi says they are “very interested” in exploring this avenue (Gachuhi, May 28, 2004). The School’s co-founder

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<sup>31</sup> The East Africa School of Journalism opened its doors August 12, 2002.

and former deputy-director, Esther Kamweru, was the resident gender specialist. She left the position when she was appointed Executive Director of the Media Council. Kamweru, in addition to her position at the Media Council, also teaches at Tangaza College. Tangaza has a course in Gender, Media and Development which they began teaching in Winter 2005. Kamweru says she hopes students learn to “look at news with a gender lens. They will be able to look at women as newsmakers. Journalists will be able to write stories that are gender-sensitive. The two sides of a story” (Kamweru, May 31, 2004).

Kamweru and her colleague Zeke Waweru in a report on journalism training needs in Kenya highlighted the lack of specialized training as one of the handicaps of trained professionals. By ‘specialized training,’ they included political reporting, investigative journalism, gender-sensitive writing and development journalism (Ambani and Waweru, 229).

### **Gender-divide in journalism school admissions**

Journalism school, or a university education at all, was not always a necessity in order to enter the profession. In fact, it was only in 2004 that media houses began firing staff without a first degree; female journalists have been the hardest hit. To help female journalists stay in the newsroom, AMWIK launched a scholarship in May 2004 to fund degree courses for women in the media. Tourism and Information Minister Raphael Tuju appealed to donors to provide scholarships to female journalists as a way of contributing to affirmative action (Evelyn Kwamboka, *New Fund for women journalists*, Sunday

Standard, May 2, 2004). The Association also encourages girls to pursue journalism through speaking engagements in high schools.

AMWIK has been involved in getting journalism schools to consider gender in the admissions process. Before long, affirmative action in the selection process may no longer be necessary. By all accounts, every year there are more young women in journalism school. In some cases, they even surpass the men. Nyamwamu at KIMC says affirmative action started in 2003 (Nyamwamu, May 26, 2004). In fact, women's enrolment in the only government training institution for media grew ten-fold from 30 women in 1994 to 313 women in 2003 (Republic of Kenya, 15). In 2003, the Ministry of Gender issued a 'suggestion,' but not a directive, that affirmative action for women should be used in admitting students. Every year officials from the ministry go through the admissions list to approve the decisions.

"They pushed for female students. They wanted us to be gender-sensitive when we are doing admissions. They want a lady to have a position in society. They are coming in to check our admissions. To check whether we are gender-sensitive or not," Nyamwamu says.

As in other state-run schools, girls now have a lower grade threshold to gain admission. In most years, KIMC graduates 700 students, of whom at least 300 are women.

In the School of Journalism at the University of Nairobi, the gender divide for students is between 35 and 40 per cent girls. Kiai says the admissions board does consider gender, but unlike the KIMC, admissions are based on more than just marks. "In the classroom we're still struggling. Some years we get 50-50," Kiai says. Also, she

notes, the introduction of a master's degree has brought in more women (Kiai, May 27, 2004).

At the EASJ, the newest journalism school in the country, admissions have grown from six students in 2002 to 70 in 2004. The gender divide is, Gachuhi says, "lopsided" in that 75 per cent of the students are women. "It's fascinating. So many more women who are interested in journalism than men," he says (Gachuhi, May 28, 2004).

But there's an important distinction to be made. Many more people of both sexes are interested in broadcast. "It's not difficult to know why. Because the broadcast industry in Kenya, especially the radio, has been expanding in leaps and bounds. So there are a lot more people who are interested in broadcast, and much, much fewer in print," Gachuhi says. Out of the 70 EASJ students, between 40 and 50 are in broadcast.

### **Women going into broadcasting**

At the KIMC and elsewhere, more young women are going into broadcasting than print. Director Nyamwamu explains, "That's what they like. That's what their area of specialization is. They are really doing well. In the media houses we have very many ladies doing well, and they are in higher positions." As for the press, young female journalists are "not doing so well." Nyamwamu says female journalism students are "lazy" and would rather appear on screen than research and write (Nyamwamu, May 26, 2004). In fact, she can't name a single woman who has come from the school and done well in the press. At the University of Nairobi the story is much the same. Kiai says female students don't want to go into mainstream media, choosing instead to enter the

non-governmental, civil society sector or public relations. “Even those we train sometimes are not willing to be in newspapers,” Kiai says (Kiai, May 27, 2004).

Young Kenyan women journalists choosing broadcast over print follows an international trend. The *Global Media Monitoring Project 2000* found 56 per cent of television presenters were women, compared to 28 per cent of radio reporters, and 26 per cent of newspaper reporters. In countries such as the US – where women are the majority in journalism courses – only a small percentage go on to work in the media, opting for jobs in other sectors such as public relations (Gender Links, 24).

In an interesting display of an old stereotype still used to explain unequal employment patterns, *Standard* Managing Editor Pamela Makotsi-Sittoni also implies that young women are lazy. “First I think newspaper work is really hard. Maybe it’s the easier option for them. I really don’t why they prefer television, but really it comes with a lot of glamour and it’s fairly easy,” she says. In the newsroom, Makotsi-Sittoni says, a lot more is required as the research and writing schedule is quite hectic (Makotsi-Sittoni, June 4, 2004).

Makotsi-Sittoni says that from her class at the School of Journalism, who graduated 10 years ago, there is only one other female reporter who has stayed in the print media “and everyone else came for a few days. It was like a stepping stone- you work there, you’re a reporter, you have a byline and then you look for a communications job and move on. It’s the easier job.” Kiai agrees, “I’ve seen young girls come into the newsroom from the school, and they don’t last. They stay for two years, three years or even a year. Then the next time you hear about them, they’re in p.r.” (Kiai, May 27, 2004).

Godia seems confused by all the disappearing women in the print media. She too graduated from journalism school ten years prior. “I don’t know if it’s the hours - but even in broadcasting people put in those odd hours” (Godia, May 31, 2004). Perhaps the younger women are of a weaker stock? “You find that they don’t last. You wonder what sort of frustrations they go through... You have to stand on your two feet. Don’t let that wind come and sway you. I’ve been there and I know that it’s not easy. You just have to be strong. Every day you get into that newsroom and there are frustrations. ”

The few veteran female journalists who remain suggest many younger women are not cut out for the daily battles in the newsroom. “I see girls crying. Literally crying in the newsroom because they are unable to speak for themselves. I see them come and go in that newsroom. I don’t even know how I managed,” Godia concludes.

Godia’s boss, media manager Tom Mshindi of the *Standard*, in addition to drinking with fellow editors is also infamous for having once said at a business conference, “I look around and I don’t see any women to promote.”<sup>32</sup> There simply weren’t, Mshindi said, enough qualified women to promote. In recent years, Mshindi must have changed his mind, because the managing editor of his flagship television station, KTN is a woman – Farida Karoney. She was promoted the same day to managing editor as Pamela Makotsi-Sittoni, ME of the *Standard*. In an ironic twist, Makotsi-Sittoni says when she was in journalism school she planned to follow the same career path as many of her female counterparts. “I wanted to get in the paper a bit, then get a good NGO job and settle down. It didn’t quite work out,” she concludes with a grin (Makotsi-Sittoni, June 4, 2004).

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<sup>32</sup> This quote was repeated in separate interviews with Okello-Orlale and Kiai.

## CONCLUSION

Newspapers in Kenya often act as a bridge between the public and local organizations. When I met Myra Karani, a journalist working for the Coalition on Violence against Women (COVAW), she was gathering press clippings for one of their publications. She says cuttings help them count the number of violence cases and get information on police activity. Also, when they read about a case, COVAW sometimes contacts police to reach the victim for follow-up. And it works both ways, with women accessing the organization through a mention in the newspaper. “So many of them call here- ‘I read an article in the newspaper, there was a woman who came to COVAW and you helped her – where are you people located?’” (Karani, May 14, 2004).

The Foundation for Gender and Equality uses press clippings for letters to donors and publications. Anne Ngugi, chair of another women’s rights organization, the Women’s Rights Awareness Programme (WRAP), says members of the public call (to get assistance) as a result of what they’ve seen in the paper. “We feel they [the press] have helped us to achieve our goals,” she says (Ngugi, May 20, 2004).

Most local non-governmental organizations monitor the press on a daily basis. They then use these clippings to push for policy change. Rita Maingi of the Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK) says human-interest stories, detailing the living conditions of Kenyans, will help push for legislation to be passed. “Things like women and domestic violence. If we keep highlighting such issues, the government will see how serious this is and will pass bills,” Maingi says (Maingi, May 18, 2004).

Rosemary Okello-Orlale, African Woman and Child Feature Service (AWC) executive director, says, “Every policy-maker reads it in the morning, before they do

anything...Most of their policy, they take it from the media.” In particular, she says, leaders are influenced by the media on policy issues such as HIV/AIDS and human rights (Okello-Orlale, May 23, 2004). The consequence, of course, is that if women’s voices aren’t featured in the press, their needs won’t be reflected in policy either. Okello-Orlale has researched the connections between policy and the media in Kenya (for a textbook on reporting policy now being used at the University of Nairobi’s journalism program). Based on interviews conducted with policy-makers in the writing of this textbook, 50 per cent of policy, she concluded, comes from the newspaper. “If 52 per cent of the population, their voices are not being heard in a proper manner in the newspaper, that means that policy always ignores them because they’re being heard as victims, as prostitutes, as ne’er-do-wells.”

The lack of women’s voices and perspectives on issues of politics and economics, as well as other development issues, gives the impression that women in the region have no opinions, or are not affected by these issues. Without information about women and their contribution to national development, “society is handicapped in formulating policies and programmes that are truly reflective of the whole” (Lopi, 2).

In order to get women and women’s issues into the paper, women’s groups target community leaders. AMWIK serves as a focal point for women’s organizations – mobilizing the media for coverage. The AWC gave media training to women who wanted to stand as candidates in the 2002 elections, as many local correspondents didn’t even know they were running. Okello-Orlale says, “It’s a two-way thing. You have to train women in how to take advantage of the media, and access the media” (Okello-Orlale, May 23, 2004).

Naturally, the coverage of women politicians is a bit of a chicken-and-egg problem. With so few female politicians, newspaper coverage will naturally be quite low. Since women don't see themselves as politicians in the newspaper, they have no role models when it comes to standing for candidacy, and when election time rolls around, few women run. The cycle continues with few women coming to power and few women covered. This is the main reason AWC and other groups try to highlight the existing women leaders as much as possible, so that their capacity as role models for future generations of women leaders can be increased.

Many of the media women in Kenya I spoke with seem content with the incremental gains they have achieved in the last five years. Women's media organizations are primarily focused on making sure there is 'substance' in the special pull-out sections. Unlike the front pages, these special sections deliberately tackle social issues and feature women as sources. Gender mainstreaming in the main news product, they conclude, will come later. One notable success has been the rise in the number of violence-against-women stories in the regular news pages.

*Standard* Managing Editor Pamela Makotsi-Sittoni said in 2004, "We were looking at the paper recently, and we just realized, there's very little in that newspaper that a woman would be interested in." But, she says, "Sometimes things just change very radically in Kenya. We never expected that there would be such major changes at the *Standard* to necessitate about 15 people to move from the *Nation* to the *Standard*" (Makotsi-Sittoni, June 4, 2004).

Indeed, change can come quickly in Kenya. In the early months of 2003, very high hopes were placed on the new government and the country's institutions. There was

a sense that a new era was at hand, and many changes would take place in rapid succession. The media industry was no different, and many changes have taken place. For one, employers are now demanding a higher level of education from their staff. Many more young women are graduating from journalism schools and entering the industry, albeit largely in broadcasting and not print. New products are being introduced almost on a monthly basis. The dailies have introduced special sections catering specifically to women.

The challenge now is for women to be mainstreamed, in the media process both in the newsroom and in the final news product. Although certain female editors have been very influential, a critical mass of female journalists is needed in order to drastically change the news product. My fellow female journalism graduates are graduating in record numbers, but for various reasons they are not staying in print. Thus, Kenyan newspapers need more than a change in regime, they need to attract more young women to the ranks. Perhaps Makotsi-Sittoni's promotion to Managing Editor is a sign of things to come. She will surely serve as a role model for my generation of journalism graduates. A revolution may not be at hand, but the seed of optimism planted in 2002 may yet grow into a tree.

## APPENDIX 1: Coding sheet for articles

Date:

Paper:

Topic:

Article/Editorial/Opinion:

Headline:

Word count:

Byline **M / F / U / NB \***:

Lead:

Number of Sources:

How many women:

Source 1:

Source **M / F / U / R \*\***:Source Type: **GF / NGE / LP \*\*\***:

Lines of direct quotes:

Lines of paraphrases:

\* M: Male, F: Female, U: Unknown, NB: No Byline

\*\* M: Male, F: Female, U: Unknown, R: Report / Survey

\*\*\* GF: Government Figure, NGE: Non-Governmental Expert, LP: Lay Person

APPENDIX 2: Results for the *East African Standard*Table 1: Articles by Topic and Byline in the *East African Standard*

	Total	Male	Female	Unknown	No Byline
I – Politics	95	58	5	0	32
I – Business	23	13	2 (2 shared)	0	8
I – Civil Liberties	7	3	2	0	2
II – Health	7	5	0	1	2
II – Environment	12	5	2 (1 shared)	0	5 (1AFP*)
II – Education	19	12	1	1	5
II – General Poverty	2	1	0	0	0
II – Girl Child	1	1	0	0	0
II – Violence Against Women	4	5	1	0	0
II – Human Interest	5	2	2	0	1
Total	175	105	15	2	55

\* AFP: Alliance France Presse

Table 2: Articles with no female sources in the *East African Standard*

	Articles with no female sources	Total
I – Politics	85	95
I – Business	22	23
I – Civil Liberties	3	7
II – Health	5	7
II – Environment	9	12
II – Education	16	19
II – General Poverty	1	2
II – Girl Child	0	1
II – Violence Against Women	1	4
II – Human Interest	1	5
Total	143	175

Table 3: Sources by Topic and Type in the *East African Standard*

	M-GF	F-GF	U-GF	R-GF	M-NGE	F-NGE	U-NGE	R-NGE
I – Politics	101	5	26	3	33	6	4	8
I – Business	20	0	2	1	12	1	5	0
I – Civil Liberties	4	0	0	1	7	6	0	2
II – Health	8	2	1	0	12	1	0	3
II – Environment	13	1	0	0	6	2	0	0
II – Education	13	2	0	0	18	1	2	1
II – General Poverty	1	0	0	0	3	2	0	0
II – Girl Child	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
II – Violence Against Women	4	1	0	0	1	2	0	0
II – Human Interest	1	0	0	0	3	2	0	1
Total	165	10	29	5	95	26	11	15

	M-LP	F-LP	U-LP
I – Politics	1	1	5
I – Business	1	0	6
I – Civil Liberties	1	2	0
II – Health	1	2	1
II – Environment	0	0	2
II – Education	2	1	6
II – General Poverty	0	0	0
II – Girl Child	1	1	0
II – Violence Against Women	2	3	1
II – Human Interest	2	3	0
Total	11	13	21

Total sources: 401

Table 4: Single-source articles in the *East African Standard*

	Single-source Articles	Total
I – Politics	21 (1 F)	95
I – Business	8	23
I – Civil Liberties	2	7
II – Health	1	7
II – Environment	4	12
II – Education	7	19
II – General Poverty	0	2
II – Girl Child	1 (F)	1
II – Violence Against Women	0	4
II – Human Interest	2 (2F)	5
Total	46	175

Table 5: Opinion Pieces by Topic and Byline in the *East African Standard*

	Total	Male	Female
I – Politics	18	17	1
I – Business	5	4	1
I – Civil Liberties	2	2	0
II – Environment	1	1	0
Total	26	24	2

Table 6: Editorials by Topic in the *East African Standard*

I – Politics	14
I – Business	1
I – Civil Liberties	2
II – Health	1
II – Environment	1
II – Violence Against Women	2
Total	21

APPENDIX 3: Results for the *Daily Nation*Table 7: Articles by Topic and Byline in the *Daily Nation*

	Total	Male	Female	Unknown	No Byline
I – Politics	100	74	8 (3 shared)	0	17
I – Business	31	18	0	0	13
I – Civil Liberties	7	6	0	0	1
II – Health	7	3	0	0	4
II – Environment	13	8	1	0	4
II – Education	18	14	0	0	4
II – General Poverty	6	4	0	0	2
II – Girl Child	2	1	0	0	1
II – Violence Against Women	7	6	1	0	1
II – Human Interest	3	1	1	0	1
Total	194	135	11	0	48

Table 8: Articles with no female sources in the *Daily Nation*

	Articles with no female sources	Total
I – Politics	82	100
I – Business	25	31
I – Civil Liberties	7	7
II – Health	6	7
II – Environment	9	13
II – Education	15	18
II – General Poverty	6	6
II – Girl Child	0	2
II – Violence Against Women	1	7
II – Human Interest	1	3
Total	152	194

Table 9: Sources by Topic and Type in the *Daily Nation*

	M-GF	F-GF	U-GF	R-GF	M-NGE	F-NGE	U-NGE	R-NGE
I – Politics	206	13	22	6	54	6	17	6
I – Business	14	1	0	3	36	5	10	3
I – Civil Liberties	5	0	1	0	11	0	4	2
II – Health	4	0	0	0	5	2	1	0
II – Environment	9	2	1	0	9	2	4	3
II – Education	9	0	0	2	19	4	2	2
II – General Poverty	5	0	0	1	5	0	1	0
II – Girl Child	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
II – Violence Against Women	2	3	0	0	3	3	1	1
II – Human Interest	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Total	254	19	24	12	144	24	40	17

	M-LP	F-LP	U-LP
I – Politics	3	1	5
I – Business	5	0	5
I – Civil Liberties	0	0	2
II – Health	0	0	2
II – Environment	7	0	0
II – Education	0	0	0
II – General Poverty	0	0	2
II – Girl Child	1	2	1
II – Violence Against Women	4	3	1
II – Human Interest	1	2	0
Total	21	8	18

Total sources: 581

Table 10: Single-source articles in the *Daily Nation*

	Single-source Articles	Total
I – Politics	24 (5 F)	100
I – Business	5	31
I – Civil Liberties	1	7
II – Health	4	7
II – Environment	4 (1 F)	13
II – Education	6 (1 F)	18
II – General Poverty	1	6
II – Girl Child	0	2
II – Violence Against Women	0	7
II – Human Interest	2 (1 F)	3
Total	47	194

Table 11: Opinion Pieces by Topic and Byline in the *Daily Nation*

	Total	Male	Female	Unknown	No Byline
I – Politics	20	14	2	0	4
I – business	5	4	1	0	0
I – Civil Liberties	1	0	1	0	0
II – Health	3	2	1	0	0
II – Environment	1	0	1	0	0
II – Education	3	2	0	1	0
II – Violence Against Women	1	1	0	0	0
Total	34	23	6	1	4

Table 12: Editorials by Topic in the *Daily Nation*

I – Politics	9
I – Business	2
I – Civil Liberties	1
II – Health	1
II – Environment	3
II – Education	2
II – Violence Against Women	2
Total	20

APPENDIX 4: Front-page photos for the *East African Standard*Table 13: Front-Page Photos in the *East African Standard*

Date	Description	Caption	Photo Credit	Notes	Women Present?
Tues Feb. 8	John Githongo	Highly-regarded anti-corruption czar Mr. John Githongo, who quit yesterday from Government. His resignation caught donors by surprise.	None	Goes with lead story: <i>Corruption fights back, and wins as sleaze czar quits.</i>	No
Sat. Feb 19	Bar chart	Only 13 per cent of the sample population said they would vote for President Kibaki if elections were called today.	None	Goes with one of the front-page stories: <i>Kibaki comes in a distant third in new poll.</i>	No
Mon. Feb. 28	Two male drummers	Sarakasi's Jumba Changala and Uruin Marganita have been beating their drums for three days running in a bid to set new record of 100 hours of non-stop drumming.	Maxwell Agwanda (M)	Doesn't have a story in the paper to match.	No
Fri. Mar. 4	Female protesters are being loaded into a police vehicle. Don't see their faces.	Protesters are arrested after they tried to disrupt the ongoing World Trade Organisation talks in the South Coast yesterday. The human rights activists blamed the problems poor countries face on WTO's policies they claim favour rich countries.	None	"Protesters"- no names. And the caption is the whole story – not even a story inside.	Yes
Fri. Mar. 11	Pattni and wife, both holding children in their arms.	Mr. Kamlesh Pattni with his wife Minal and their two placard-waving children, daughter Ruhi (4) and son Mhir (2) outside Kamiti Maximum Security Prison after he was cleared of a murder charge yesterday.	Jackson Ngugi (M)	Pattni's wife appears, but isn't in the lead story: <i>Pattni free as murder charge is thrown out.</i>	Yes
Sun. Mar. 13	Two girls holding hands in front of a crowd	Mickey Gaiho, 5, and Dinda Karimi, 8, lead participants in the 10-kilometre Dettol Heart Run flagged off by Vice president Moody Awori and Archbishop Ndingi Mwana Nzeki at Carnivore Restaurant yesterday.	Hudson Wainaina (M)	This picture doesn't have a matching story.	Yes
Wed. Mar. 23	Kenyan athletes smiling and waving	Kenyan athletes (from left) Ndiwa Mangata, Augustine Choge, Bernard Kiprop and Mike Masai show off their	Govedi Asutsa (M)	Classic sports medal photo (not connected to a story)	No

		medals at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport yesterday. The junior men runners had just arrived from the World Cross-Country Championships in France			
Tues. April 5	One smiling guy, another on phone	Mr. David Makai, The Sunday Standard Managing Editor (left) shakes hands with his co-accused police officer John Chemweno yesterday at the High Court in Nairobi. The two were acquitted of charges of stealing a tape, containing information on the death of university lecturer Dr. Chrispin Mbai in September 2003	Noor Khamis (F)	Matches headline story ' <i>Standard</i> ' editor and policeman win case	No
Thurs. Apr. 7	Moi signing a book	Former President Daniel arap Moi signs a condolence book at the Apostolic Nunciature at Lavington, Nairobi, yesterday. Looking on is Fr. Julien Kabore, the Charge D'Affaires.	None	Goes with news story (inside): <i>Moi mourns Pope John Paul II.</i>	No
Mon. Apr. 25	Crowd shot of men and women looking down, and some crying.	The Vice-President, Mr. Moody Awori (second row right) with other world leaders during the inauguration of Pope Benedict XVI at St Peter's Basilica Church at the Vatican yesterday.	None	With front-page news item: <i>VP at Pope's installation fete</i>	Yes
Sat. May 21	Happy-looking smiling tourists	US delegates, John McGee and his wife, Ruth, arrive at a Nairobi hotel yesterday for the International Press Institute World Congress.	Hudson Wainaina (M)	With news item (inside): <i>Delegates arrive in Nairobi for IPI congress</i>	<b>Yes</b>
Thurs. May 26	Ngilu with hurt child on her lap	Health minister Charity Ngilu with three-year old Burushi Otieno, a patient at Kenyatta National Hospital, yesterday	Noor Khamis (F)	With lead new item: <i>Kenyatta hospital strike called off</i>	Yes
Wed. June 1	Woman pointing, and speaking, clutching Amnesty report	Ms Wahu Kaara, an All African Conference of Churches representative, launches the 2005 Amnesty International report yesterday	Lisa Rypeng (F)	With front-page news item: <i>Amnesty accuses State of rights abuses</i>	Yes
Sun. June 5	Woman holding baby – looking grief-stricken	A Mother's Anguish: Ms Goretti Achieng's baby died at the Nyanza Provincial Hospital yesterday as mother and child waited to be attended to. The nurses were	Titus Munala (M)	This photo goes with a story that was buried inside the paper (does not appear in web headlines)	Yes

		nowhere in sight as the strike by civil servants continued.			
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APPENDIX 5: Front-page photos for the *Daily Nation*Table 14: Front-Page Photos in the *Daily Nation*

Date	Description	Caption	Photo Credit	Notes	Women Present?
Tues Feb. 8	John Githongo	Mr Githongo	None	Goes with lead story: <i>Why Githongo resigned.</i>	No
Sat. Feb 19	Pres. Kibaki	President Kibaki	File	Goes with lead story: <i>Cabinet talks tough on graft cases</i>	No
Mon. Feb. 21	VP Moody Awori	Vice President Moody Awori	File	Goes with lead story: <i>Police oppose plan to free 20,000 convicts</i>	No
Fri. Mar. 4	Male protester with two police officers restraining him on either side	Police officers arrest one of the demonstrators protesting against the WTO mini-ministerial meeting at the Leisure Lodge and Golf Resort in Ukunda, Kwale district yesterday. Up to 60 demonstrators were arrested.	Gideon Maundu (M)	Goes with lead story: <i>Police thwart anti-globalisation protest</i>	No
Fri. Mar. 11	Outside of Parliament	Parliament	File	Goes with lead story: <i>Four ministers, MPs face fraud probe</i>	No
Sun. Mar. 13	Outside bank building	Head office of Consolidated Bank in Nairobi. The bank was built from assets of fallen indigenous banks in 1980s.	File	Goes with lead story: <i>Scheme to take over state-owned bank</i>	No
Wed. Mar. 23	Raila head-shot	Mr Raila	File	Goes with lead story: <i>Ministers accuse Raila of inciting the public</i>	No
Tues. Apr. 5	Woman bending down to sign book, in front of a queue	None	None	Goes with lead story: <i>Kenyans queue to honour John Paul</i>  You can't see her face	Yes
Thurs. Apr. 7	John Githongo	Mr Githongo	File	Goes with lead story: <i>No end to Githongo mystery</i>	No
Mon. Apr. 25	Raila bending	LDP leader Raila Odinga	Sylvester	Goes with lead	No

	over to chat with another man	(right) with Harrisi MP George Kharini at the funeral of Emuhaya MP Kenneth Mwarende's wife on Saturday	Onyango (M)	story: <i>Don't tamper with draft constitution, Raila tells State</i>	
Thurs. May 19	Man giving a thumbs-up	Lord Delamere's son Tom Cholmondeley gives the thumbs-up sign inside a police Land Rover outside the Nakuru Law Courts shortly after his murder case was terminated.	Joseph Kiheri (M)	Goes with lead story: <i>Outrage as Delamere is freed over killing</i>	No
Sat. May 21	Delamere head-shot	Mr Tom Cholmondeley	George Mulala (M)	Goes with lead story: <i>Delamere: Now ministers pile pressure on Wako</i>	<b>No</b>
Wed. June 1	Three women make up the front row of a group of protesters	None	None	Goes with lead story: <i>Strike at your peril, civil servants warned</i>	Yes
Sun. June 5	Pres. Kibaki	President Kibaki	File	Goes with lead story: <i>President summons ministers over strike</i>	No

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**Tulezi Clement**

Communications Officer  
League of Kenya Women Voters  
Interviewed on May 18, 2004

**Roy Gachuhi**

Director  
East Africa School of Journalism (EASJ)  
Interviewed on May 28, 2004

**Jane Godia**

Chief Sub-Editor  
Sunday Standard  
Interviewed on May 31, 2004

**Esther Kamweru**

Professor  
Institute of Social Communication  
Tangaza College  
Interviewed on May 31, 2004

**Wambui Kanji**

Programme Officer  
Collaborative Centre for Women and Democracy  
Interviewed on May 19, 2004

**Myra Karani**

Journalist  
Coalition on Violence against Women (COVAW)  
Interviewed on May 14, 2004

**Matilda Kasanga**

Tanzanian journalist on internship  
Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK)  
Interviewed on June 3, 2004

**Dr. Wambui Kiai**

Director – School of Journalism  
University of Nairobi  
Interviewed on May 27, 2004

**Rita Maingi**

Programme Assistant  
Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK)  
Interviewed on May 18, 2004

**Pamella Makotsi-Sittoni**

Deputy Managing Editor  
East African Standard  
Interviewed on June 4, 2004

**Pamela Mburia**

Coordinator  
AMWIK  
Interviewed on May 18, 2004

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Programme Officer  
Education Centre for Women and Democracy  
Interviewed on May 11, 2004

**Esther Mwaura**

Director  
Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood (GROOTS – Kenya)  
Interviewed on May 25, 2004

**Anne Ngugi**

Chairperson  
Women's Rights Awareness Programme (WRAP)  
Interviewed on May 20, 2004

**Isabella Nyamwamu**

Director Information Training  
Kenya Institute of Mass Communication (KIMC)  
Interviewed on May 26, 2004

**Rosemary Okello-Orlale**

Executive Director  
African Woman and Child Feature Service (AWC)  
Interviewed on May 23, 2004

**Eliud Shireichi Nabo**

Project Development Manager  
Foundation for Gender and Equality  
Interviewed on May 19, 2004

**Lynne Muthoni Wanyieki**

Executive Director

The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET)  
Interviewed on May 13, 2004