



**GUIDELINES TO PROTECT
WOMEN FROM DISCRIMINATION
IN MEDIA AND FILM**

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I. Introduction

Pursuant to the policy of the State to promote women empowerment, the portrayal of the roles of women and men in media must be gender-sensitive. It will help eliminate the stereotyping of roles of women and men in society that hampers women empowerment.

Consequently, these guidelines are devised and shall serve as a basis on how roles of women should be portrayed in media & films. While respecting the self-regulation of the media, these guidelines seek to protect women against discrimination in media portrayal as well as the rights of women workers in the media. Every media enterprise – publication, broadcast and advertising agency – is mandated by law to review and revise their codes and policies to include the provisions of Republic Act No. 9710 otherwise known as the Magna Carta of Women.

II. Applicability

These guidelines are applicable, but not limited to the following:

1. Reporters
2. Editors

3. Publishers
4. Columnists
5. Cartoonists
6. Photographers
7. Broadcasting stations
8. Program hosts and anchors
9. Program managers
10. Film-makers
11. Directors
12. Scriptwriters
13. Producers
14. Block timers
15. Researchers
16. Advertisers
17. Public Relations Officers
18. Copywriters
19. Bloggers
20. Websites and Content Providers

III. Objectives of the Guidelines

1. To protect women against discrimination and promote gender equality;
2. To help media practitioners develop positive images of women and men and eliminate stereotypes and discrimination;

3. To encourage media practitioners to use gender sensitive language and images in print, photos, television and radio programs, advertisements and films; and
4. To increase consciousness of people in the media industry to the problems related to the negative or inequitable portrayal of women and men.

IV. Definition of Terms

The following definition of terms is based on the Inter Press Service (IPS) Gender and Development Glossary:

Discrimination

The Inter Press Service defines discrimination as – the difference in the treatment of a person on a basis other than individual merit. Derived from the Latin term “discriminate” (to divide, separate, distinguish), it refers to action based on prejudice against age, physical abilities, class, ethnicity, sex, race or religion.

The Magna Carta of Women based on the Women’s Convention defines discrimination against women as – any gender-based distinction, exclusion or restriction which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women,

irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of man and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

Gender – refers to the differences between males and females that are socially constructed, changeable over time and have wide variations within and between cultures.

Gender Roles – refers to the socially determined behaviors, tasks and responsibilities for men and women based on socially perceived differences that define how they should think, act and feel based on their respective sex.

Gender Sensitivity – refers to the ability to understand and consider the socio-cultural factors underlying gender-based discrimination, socialization of men and women into certain behaviors or opportunities, power relations between men and women, as well as the different needs, problems and levels of access to resources that they have.

Non-sexist language – also commonly known as gender-neutral language, gender-inclusive language, or gender neutrality, it is the language use that aims at minimizing assumptions regarding the gender of human referents. For example, this may include replacing words such as *mankind* and *stewardess* with terms such as *humanity* and *flight attendant*.

Stereotype Images / Sex-Role Stereotyping – refers to the assumption that certain traits, ways of behaving, interacting with others, working, etc., are ‘naturally’ associated with each sex. It is seen as inappropriate for one sex to act in a manner associated with the other sex. Representation plays a key role in shaping what becomes social reality. Sex role stereotypes convey messages about expected appearance and behavior of women and men, shaping both our ideas and expectations of women and men.

V. Legal Mandates

A. 1987 Philippine Constitution

Section 14, Article II¹, provides that the State recognizes the role of women in nation building, and shall ensure the fundamental equality before the law of women and men.

Section 24, Article II², recognizes the vital role of communication and information in nation-building.

Section 4, Article 3 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, provides that, “No law shall be passed abridging the freedom of speech, of expression or of the press, or the right of the people to peaceably assemble and petition the government for redress of grievances.

¹ Declaration of Principles and State Policies, 1987 Phil. Cons.

² Ibid.

Freedom of Expression is not absolute and the right can be subject to some regulations of the State in order that it may not be injurious to the equal right of others³.

B. Republic Act No. 9710 otherwise known as Magna Carta of Women:

Section 16 “Non-discriminatory and Non-derogatory Portrayal of Women in Media and Film”, Chapter 4 of the Republic Act provides that, “The State shall formulate policies and programs for the advancement of women in collaboration with government and nongovernment media-related organizations. It shall likewise endeavor to raise the consciousness of the general public in recognizing the dignity of women and the role and contribution of women in the family, community, and the society through the strategic use of mass media.”

C. Presidential Decree No. 442 – as amended otherwise known as the Labor Code of the Philippines

Article 3 of Chapter 1 General Provisions declares the basic policy of the state as - “The State shall afford protection to labor, promote full employment, ensure equal work opportunities regardless of sex, race or creed and regulate the relations between workers and employers. The State shall assure the rights of workers to self-organization, collective bargaining, security of tenure, and just and humane conditions of work.”

D. INTERNATIONAL LAWS

1. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

The Convention was adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly (and ratified by the Philippines in 1981). It is a human rights treaty that lays down governmental obligations on matters related to any form of discrimination against women in terms of individual right and freedom.

The Convention aims at equality between men and women through the assurance of equal access to and equal opportunities in public life, education, health, employment. It is the first treaty that targets harmful cultural and traditional practices that shape gender roles. Countries that have ratified the Convention are legally bound to implement its provisions and submit reports at least every four years.

2. Beijing Conference

The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in the Chinese capital in 1995 produced a declaration of the international community's commitment to the advancement of women and a platform of action that set out measures for action by 2000. The conference provided a clear commitment that the protection and promotion of the rights of women and girl- children are a key part of universal human rights.

VI. General Guidelines

A. Rights of Women

The following rights of women should be considered in their portrayal in media:

1. Right to participate in policy formulation, planning, organization, implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation of all programs, projects and services;
2. Right to be free from all forms of violence;
3. Right to be free from multiple barriers -- ethnicity, gender, age, language, sexual orientation, race, color, religion, political, or other opinion, national, social, or geographical origin, disability, property, birth, or other status as established by human rights standards -- to their empowerment and advancement;
4. Right to protection and security in times of disasters, calamities, armed conflict, militarization, and other crisis situations;
5. Right to freely participate and enjoy the cultural life, indigenous arts and traditions of the community;
6. Right to contribute to and share in the benefits of educational, scientific,

economic, and cultural advancement;

7. Right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief; and
8. Right to non-discrimination.

B. Women Empowerment

Women Empowerment refers to the provision, availability, and accessibility of opportunities, services, and observance of human rights which enable women to actively participate and contribute to the political, economic, social, and cultural development of the nation as well as those which shall provide them equal access to ownership, management, and control of production, and of material and informational resources and benefits in the family, community, and society⁴

There are five components in Women's Empowerment:

1. Women's sense of self-worth;
2. Their right to have and to determine choices;
3. Their right to have access to opportunities and resources;
4. Their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and
5. Their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just, social and economic order, nationally and internationally.⁵

4 Section 4(a), Chapter 2 of RA 9710.
5 IPS Gender and Development Glossary

C. Role of Media

1. To provide truthful and informative stories, reports, programs, advertisements and films for the benefit of the public; and
2. To develop industry awareness and commitment to its social responsibilities, including the promotion of values.

VII. Specific Guidelines

A. Portrayal of Women

1. Women should be portrayed and represented with dignity;
2. Women and men should be portrayed in a wide range of roles both traditional and non-traditional, in paid work, social, family and leisure activities;
3. Women should also be portrayed as decision makers and providers of the family;
4. Women should be portrayed as significant contributors in the academe, business, socio-political, cultural and religious fields;
5. Stories, reports, programs, advertisements, and films should portray diversity in family structures;

6. Stories, reports, programs, advertisements, and films about family planning, reproductive rights, welfare, health of the mother and the child, education and upbringing of children, should be directed to both men and women; and
7. Media practitioners should not ridicule and stigmatize or give less importance to people, by reason of gender, sexual orientation, and physical attributes.

B. Gender Inclusive Language

1. Media practitioners must practice the use of gender-fair/ gender-neutral language; and
2. Media must avoid language that is vulgar, indecent, promotes substance abuse, gender discrimination, racism, Satanism, violence or sexual perversion or demeans a member of any sector of society.

C. Gender Equality in the Workplace

1. Women must be paid equally including other forms of remuneration and fringe benefits, as a male employee, for work of equal value;
2. Women employees must have equal opportunities to promotion, training,

study and scholarship grants like male employees;

3. Every woman employee is entitled to maternity leave and to discharge any woman employee for the purpose of preventing her from enjoying any of the benefits provided under this Code is unlawful;
4. A pregnant woman may not be discharged on account of her condition, or while on leave or in confinement due to her pregnancy; and
5. A woman shall not be discharged or refused admission from work for fear that she may again be pregnant.

D. Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a form of discrimination. Under Republic Act No. 7877 otherwise known as the “Anti-Sexual Harassment Act of 1995”, Section 3 defines work, education or training-related sexual harassment – as that which is committed by an employee, manager, supervisor, agent of the employer, teacher, instructor, professor, coach, trainer, or any other person who, having authority, influence or moral ascendancy over another in a work or training or education environment, demands, requests or otherwise requires any sexual favor from the other, regardless of whether the demand, request or requirement for submission is accepted by the object of said Act.

The law mandates every institution to promulgate rules and regulations as well as set up mechanisms to address the issue.

E. What can unions (and media organizations and other related groups) do?⁶

- Create awareness about sexual harassment at the workplace, and the need to combat it. This can be done through posters, handouts, pamphlets, bulletins, notices, badges (something like ‘Zero Tolerance Zone for Sexual Harassment’)
- Ensure that the workplace has a policy to deal with sexual harassment at the workplace, and has set up a Complaints Committee as required by law.
- Ensure that sexual harassment is listed as ‘misconduct’ in the service rules of the company.
- Lobby to ensure union representation on the Complaints Committee, counter any trends towards anti-labor practices.
- Conduct workshops to promote gender sensitivity among union members.
- Conduct workshops in self-defense and personality development in order to boost the confidence of women union members.
- Set up Gender Councils to take the issue forward.

- Support any woman who complains about sexual harassment, and assist her in pursuing justice.

F. Checklist for gender equality in media unions

Determine whether gender equality exists in your union through this checklist.

- **The Organization's Policy:** Does the organization have a clear policy on all aspects of gender equality including a policy to promote the integration of women?
- **Use of funds:** Is adequate funding provided to carry out all aspects of gender policy?
- **Procedures, putting policy into practice:** How is the gender policy put into practice? Does it really guide all of your activities?
- **Understanding needs:** Are there significant gaps in your membership? How do you consult members? Do your consultation practices help you to understand the needs of women?
- **Decision-making:** When making decisions or setting priorities are women well represented? Do you routinely consider the impact of your activities on your women members?

- **Monitoring information:** Do you collect enough information about women and men to monitor activities by gender? Do you consult monitoring figures when making decisions? Do you regularly use this data to assess the effectiveness of your core activities?
- **Visibility:** Can a woman's voice be heard or seen in all your reports, speeches, meetings and publications?
- **Breaking down barriers:** Do you fully understand the barriers, which deter women from joining, taking part, speaking out or competing for leadership in your union?
- **Leadership:** Are men in leadership active in promoting change? How do you ensure men to develop an understanding of gender issues?
- **Women's structures:** Are women's structures and representatives of women members fully integrated into union decision-making structures?
- **Targeting:** Do you target your activities and services? Are women challenged to get more involved? Do you recognize that positive action may be necessary if you want just results?⁷

VIII. Recommendations

A. Monitoring and Training

Section J of the United Nations Beijing Platform for Action recognized the importance of media monitoring as a tool for change. It encourages NGOs and media professional associations to establish 'media watch groups that can monitor the media and consult with media to ensure that women's needs and concerns are properly reflected.

The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) began prior to the Beijing Declaration. The 1994 Bangkok international conference on 'Women Empowering Communication' organized by the World association for Christian Communication (WACC) in association with the International Women's Tribune Center in New York and ISIS Manila conceived the idea of a one day study of the representation and portrayal of women in media.

To undertake gender and media monitoring initiatives, the following specific actions may be taken:

- a. Train trainers in media monitoring
- b. Develop a training manual for gender and media monitoring.
- c. Produce statistics and reference databases on the gender dimensions of news, advertising, entertainment, soap operas and telenovelas running over extended periods of time.
- d. Disseminate the results of studies by media observatories using

audiovisual products that show the lack of coherence between media messages, country realities and the need for awareness of a reflective and critical approach to media.

- e. Share tools and experiences in policy and media monitoring.
- f. Establish media monitoring working groups to undertake ongoing and consistent media monitoring at national level
- g. Work with media councils and media associations to implement action plans using the results of national media monitoring as evidence.⁸

B. Mainstreaming Gender Equality in Media Awards

- 1. Add gender equality in content and programming as a criterion for media awards.
- 2. Encourage all award giving bodies to create a category on Gender sensitivity.
- 3. Encourage all award giving bodies to recognize the contribution of women to the community and society.