

## Dr. Philip Lee (WACC) on the History, Challenges, and Achievements of the GMMP

Dr. Philip Lee is the General Secretary of WACC, the World Association for Christian Communication.

Active since 1968, WACC is an international non-governmental organisation that promotes the rights to communicate.

‘What we're trying to do is assist people in the Global South on communication projects, many of which are focused around. Community media, for example.

So, we help local grassroots organisations speak up about issues that matter to them,’ explains Dr. Lee.

‘On another level, we do a lot of advocacy work around policy change and media reform. One of the issues in everybody's minds at the moment is public interest journalism.’

The GMMP (Global Media Monitoring Project), the world’s largest international study of gender in the news media, is one of the projects coordinated by WACC.

‘The idea of the portrayal of women and men in the news was conceived at the Women Empowering Communication Conference that took place in Bangkok back in ’94,’ continues Dr. Lee.

‘The 1990 New World Information Communication Order (NWICO) began to highlight the fact that people were being left out of global communications.



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And then, in '94, the key players involved started thinking about having the topic being addressed at the 1995 United Nations' Beijing Platform for Action. That's how the GMMP got started.'

## The GMMP: 20+ Years of Successes and Challenges

Since 1995, the Global Media Monitoring Project has been conducted every five years.

During these 20+ years, the GMMP has seen its fair share of successes.

'Successes are "easy". Every five years, more countries and more volunteers have been involved in the GMMP, to try to change the situation in the local context. There are a many success stories where groups working in a country like Georgia, Bolivia, or Kenya, for instance, have challenged news media outlets to change their policies and to think again about the representation of women in the news.'

However, despite such stories, this global research endeavour has faced challenges too. It might be surprising to some, but such challenges revolve around the same kinds of issues success stories do revolve around.

Dr. Lee's analysis is clear.

'In many countries of the Global South, a lot of men don't want to see these changes. They don't think that women should have a voice or should be represented any better than they are now.

And, of course, there is a lot of misogyny involved in that as well. I don't know whether it's a fear of women but a lot of countries and people are less keen to give women a voice or a presence. This is a power struggle.'

Despite this, there have been changes and positive developments in recent years – which have led to women being put in positions of power (Prime Ministers and leadership positions at different levels, for example).

## The Only Global News Flow Study Left

As of today, the Global Media Monitoring Project is the only global news flow study that remains.

According to Dr. Lee, this has primarily to do with two matters.

The first one is the financial component. 'Funding is certainly an issue – it costs quite a bit to coordinate and prepare across the five years, and there is the follow-up work,' he shares.

Then, there's the pursuit of change, the attempt of using the research findings to actually have an impact on the current status quo.

'It isn't good enough to say "here's a piece of research, let's send it out to people". A project like the GMMP demands a lot of dedicated work after the event, otherwise it goes on the shelf and nobody does anything thereafter.

The question becomes *how do we take these findings to bring about change at the level of media outlets in a given situation?*

It isn't simply a matter of phoning someone up or having a meeting for a day. You have to work really hard at it.

I think that this is why the GMMP has survived, because of what it has achieved.

However, it hasn't been able to do enough, yet. If more people at the level of policy change were to be involved with the research project, we would see change take place faster.'

## The Future of the GMMP: Rebuilding Trust in the Media?

For WACC General Secretary Dr. Philip Lee, the GMMP has hit a problem, something that was unforeseen not only at the time the research project started but during recent years as well.

And this issue is still ongoing.

‘The problem came with former United States President Donald Trump, who denigrated the media to such a point that people have now lost trust in the whole idea that the media have a positive role to play in democratisation and in society,’ Dr. Lee says.

So, the focus of future efforts or endeavours such as the Global Media Monitoring Project, as well as key stakeholders in the media sphere, should be on reshaping that view and trying to rebuild trust with the public.

‘We have to rebuild that trust in the public news media, and this is going to be a difficult, and long, job.

This will go hand in hand with the question *How successful will the GMMP 2020 be?*

And what are the concrete steps that can be taken, over the next five years, to provide greater accountability?’, Dr. Lee asks.

‘That is really what it comes back to, accountability at the level of news media, and at the level of social media – with regard to the representation of women.’

You can learn more about the Global Media Monitoring Project and the resources mentioned during the interview [here](#).

## RESOURCES MENTIONED DURING THE INTERVIEW:

- [WACC](#) (World Association for Christian Communication)
- [GMMP](#) (Global Media Monitoring Project)
- [Women Empowering Communication conference](#) (Bangkok, 1994)
- [NWICO](#) (New World Information and Communication Order)
- [International Women's Tribune Center](#)
- [United Nation's Platform for Action](#) (Beijing, 1995)
- [WhoMakesTheNews.org](#)