

Dr. Sarah Macharia (WACC) on Gender Equality, the Present and Future of the GMMP

Dr. Sarah Macharia is the Program Manager for Gender and Communication and for Monitoring Rural Poverty Reporting at WACC, the World Association for Christian Communication.

WACC coordinates the GMMP (Global Media Monitoring Project), research that focuses on gender in the news.

‘It’s a single day snapshot of gender in the news,’ says Dr. Macharia, who has been involved with the GMMP since 2010. ‘This snapshot has been taken every five years since 1995.’

The most recent round of the GMMP, which took place on September 29th 2020, featured thousands of volunteers from 145 countries.

‘The volunteers agreed to come together to apply a standard methodology to code gender in the content of broadcast on television and radio news, content that is published in national newspapers and on internet news websites, as well as content tweeted by local news media houses.’

The goal of the GMMP is to crystallise gender inequality in news content into hard statistics, into quantifiable data.



Why Gender Equality and Representation in the Media Are Key

One of the key questions a listener of this podcast interview might ask himself/herself is *Why are gender equality and representation in the media topics worth analysing through research efforts such as the GMMP?*

‘It’s important because if we understand the news media, or even the media in general, as a shaper of culture, then we understand its role as something that could, potentially, prevent advancements toward gender equality.’

As Dr. Macharia stresses, the importance and impact of issues the Global Media Monitoring Project focuses on transcends the media space.

‘It has also been recognised in various international spaces, and in government policy, that the media is one space in which gender equality plays out – and that shapes how we understand each other, and how we understand our roles as men, as women, and as different people who live in our society.

It’s important to democratise this space, because everyone should have the opportunity to have their voices heard.’

Recent Developments of the GMMP

For over 20 years, hundreds of researchers, activists, scholars, and media watch groups around the world have been carrying out the Global Media Monitoring Project.

The research has had quite the fluid and dynamic approach, following and adjusting to some of the developments that have transformed the media and news space.

To date, the number of countries has grown (currently, the GMMP covers around 70% of the world): 76 countries participated in 2005, 108 in 2010 and 114 in 2015.

And new objects of analysis, such as the monitoring of tweets, for instance, have been introduced in recent years.

‘In 2020, we opened up all the internet and Twitter monitoring to all the participating countries, as long as these were important news delivery spaces in their context,’ Dr. Macharia explains.

‘Another thing that we have done is including some indicators that deal with Facebook. As we know, Facebook is a social media platform on which many news audiences are, and which is important as a news delivery space too.

These examples show that we have tried to expand into the digital media space in the recent past.'

In terms of data, these are some of the findings from the recent edition of the GMMP, from 2015 (the findings of the GMMP 2020 are yet to be published):

- Despite making up 50% of the world's population (in 2015), women are only seen, heard or read about in the news in 24% of the cases – this number refers to the presence of women in all media: newspaper, television and radio
- The situation doesn't differ that much in digital news platforms, where only 26% of women were included in internet news stories and news media tweets
- When it comes to newscasts reporting, nothing has changed. If one of the findings of the 2010 edition of the GMMP found that 37% of analysed news stories were reported by women, the number remained the same in 2015

The (Possible) Future for the Global Media Monitoring Project

So, what is in store for the GMMP? What does Dr. Sarah Macharia foresee for this global research endeavour?

'In gathering the data to build the evidence and in growing the movement, GMMP has carved its place as a key player in the struggle for gender equality in and through the news media,' she says.

'I see the GMMP network reaching the entire world by 2030, if the current pace of growth and expansion is sustained.

Furthermore, I see the movement growing and the results being used in all spaces, as well as the GMMP being successful in mobilising meaningful financial resources to support work that, thus far, has been carried out on the back of volunteers who are largely women.'

Dr. Macharia also has some words for all the key stakeholders who are directly, or indirectly, involved in the Global Media Monitoring Project.

‘Take the results. Take them on and use them as evidence. Integrate them in your work, and become more vigilant about news media portrayals – and engage more with your audiences.’

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

RESOURCES MENTIONED DURING THE INTERVIEW:

- [GMMP](#) (Global Media Monitoring Project)
- [WACC](#) (World Association for Christian Communication)
- [WhoMakesTheNews.org](#)
- [Beijing Platform for Action](#)