UN Women in partnership with the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority (EBA) held a capacity building training on gender sensitive reporting and news coverage to print and broadcasting media practitioners from various regions of the country. The three-day training aimed to enhance the participants’ gender knowledge and to equip them with necessary skills for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The training, for over forty participants from public and private media houses, was carried out under the UN Women’s partnership project with EBA ‘Enhancing the role of media in promoting gender equality and women in leadership’. As part of the UN Women’s programme Women in Leadership and Governance, the training is one of the strategic approaches to promote women as leaders and agents of change at all level of decision-making positions.

Ms. Letty Chiwara, UN Women Representative to Ethiopia, the Africa Union and the Economic Commission for Africa together with Ms. Muludesta Werkneh, Adviser to the Minister, Ministry of Women and Children Affaires, opened the first day (31st October) with their keynote speeches. Ms. Letty Chiwara highlighted the gap of media in positively portray women and their outstanding contribution in development. She emphasized the critical role that mass media can play to positively influence the public on gender equality and women empowerment. She also urged the participants to effectively use the new skills in their work.

“You need to address the negative projection and images of women in the media including through advertisements, you need to mainstream gender through media contents, and portray women as legitimate leaders the same way as men so that men and women including the young ones can make a difference”.

Ms. Letty Chiwara (above), UN Women Representative to Ethiopia, the Africa Union and the Economic Commission for Africa.

Ms. Letty Chiwara also stated UN Women’s commitment to engage with media at various levels and the need for the media houses consistent backing. “We need you not only at high level political meetings, but also at the ground level to reveal the changes we are making such as by economically empowering the rural women and by provision of a comprehensive service to women survivors of violence”.

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Ms. Muludesta Werkneh urged media practitioners and institutions to use the skills they will acquire from the training to contribute in realizing the Growth and Transformation Plan (GPTII) in general and the women’s change and development package in particular.

“I believe that this capacity building workshop has the potential to influence media houses in revising the past and in planning for better achievements. In addition to enhancing the capacity of the media practitioners, ensuring a sustained and accountable system, which guarantees effective practice of the skills is important”.

Ms. Muludesta Werkneh (above) Adviser to the Minister, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs.

The training was facilitated by two professional consultants and included theoretical and practical aspects of media in gender equality and women empowerment, root causes of prevailing gender bias and stereotyping related to the right of women to access leadership positions as well as practical sessions on how to produce stories for media with gender sensitivity.

Influential female leaders and role models from the country such as Ms. Enatalem Melese, the Deputy Chief Executive Officer & News and Current Affairs Head of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Cooperation, shared their experiences.

Ms. Enatalem views the capacity building training as extraordinary one for including participants from all regions and diverse media houses. She said the initiative’s potential to make a turning point in the country’s mass media practices related to gender and women empowerment is vast. For this to be sustained, she advised to involve policy makers at a parliament level as crucial step.

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Ms. Muludesta Werkneh (above) Adviser to the Minister, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs.

Mr. Deressa Terefe, Mass Media Monitoring and Capacity Building Directorate Director of the Ethiopia Broadcasting Authority(EBA), briefed on the country’s media policies and ethics in relation to gender related coverage. He described the achievements, the gaps, and the steps to be taken to deal with the gaps. “Actions for awareness creation on the policies and to change attitudes of the media practitioners about gender and gender sensitive coverage will be strengthened. Accordingly, the ways in which media have been presenting women related coverage will be revised and improved”. He also stressed the importance of having regular discussion forums with the concerned parties for a sustained solution.

“Building the capacity of the mass media practitioners and hiring more women in different sectors alone may not make a sustainable solution. Because the issue of gender equality and women empowerment is also at a global level. Inclusive policy and enabling environment is necessary to take collaborative actions and to make a sustained transformation”.

Ms. Enatalem Melese (above), the Deputy Chief Executive Officer & News and Current Affairs Head of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Cooperation.
The participants committed to take proactive actions in applying what they gained.

“Before this training, I had a basic knowledge on gender. This is my first time to be trained on gender sensitive news sourcing and coverage. When I get back to the media house, I have two actions to take; first to revise what I have been doing and adjust with what I gained from the training. Second, to explain and convince the management team on the importance of reviewing our editorial policy and to include relevant guidelines that promote gender sensitive news coverage at institutional level”.

Mr. Yitbarek Kebede (above), senior reporter of Fana Broadcasting Corporate.

Ms. Hawa Allo, Reporter and Editor of Ethiopian Mass Media Agency in Afar region, described how she will be applying the skill in her regional context. “From where I came from the majority are rural people and radio is the main transmission tool. My plan in collaboration with my colleagues is to revise the editorial policy and to design a strategy that would promote gender equality and gender sensitive coverage. Using the knowledge gained, I will also encourage more women to involve in the media profession as it has been a key challenge in my region, where religious beliefs and cultural practices hinder women from exploring their potentials”.

Ms. Hawa Allo (first from left) with the certificate she received after completing the training.

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

Women in Leadership and Political Participation is a four-year programme launched in 2017 in Ethiopia. The programme aims to contribute to the overall goal of increasing the participation and representation of women in Leadership in the country, focusing particularly on the legislative and executive branch of the government. The programme applies the following strategies; collect and analyze information and data on the status of women in leadership and disseminate knowledge in the area to prompt discussion and dialogue, raise public awareness of the right of women to participate fully and effectively in public life, and to build the confidence and capacity of existing and future women leaders and decision-makers as well as facilitate mentorship opportunity for young women.

To implement the programme, the partnership includes with political institutions both at the national and regional level such as the House of Peoples Representative, particularly the parliamentary women caucus and the parliamentary standing committees (also counterparts at the regional level), gender machineries at various levels to reach women in the executive branch of the government such as Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (also regional Bureaus) and grass root community based organizations, higher level educational institutions and the media for purpose of mobilization and sensitization. In this framework, UN Women in collaboration with the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority (EBA) developed a project under the title “Enhancing the role of media in promoting gender equality and women in leadership”. The project aims to enhance the role of media in promoting gender equality in general and positive portrayal of women leaders in particular. The programme is supported by the Government of Sweden with a total budget of over $2,550,194.

For more information about the programme, contact Desset Abebe, desset.abebe@unwomen.org
For communication related information, contact Fikerte Abebe, fikerte.abebe@unwomen.org