

# The Global Media Monitoring Project

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An international day of monitoring took place on Tuesday February 1, 2000 when groups in some 70 countries studied the representation of women in the news on TV, radio and in newspapers. The first GMMP, organized by Media Watch Canada, was held in January 1995 and this second study aims to analyze changes in the media situation in half a decade.

The project, organized by the WACC Women's Program took months of planning. The GMMP Committee, which also includes Erin Research and media specialist, Margaret Gallagher, worked tirelessly to revise the monitoring materials in an attempt to make the study broader in scope and more contextual. A successful pre-test in August 1999, involving groups in 6 countries, helped put the finishing touches to the materials which were then translated into Spanish and French.

In the first few weeks of 2000 there was a last minute flurry of activity as some groups raised queries about the coding system and the monitoring process. One or two dropped out at the last minute although replacements were found so that their countries could still be included in the study. As morning broke on the day of monitoring at the WACC Secretariat in London, the participants in the Philippines had already finished their day's work and there was a sigh of relief on the Women's Desk when an e-mail was received from Imelda Benitez at the Association of Salesian Cooperators in Manila to say that the monitoring had gone smoothly. Then two more e-mails arrived. One from Margaret Gallagher in Paris, which simply said "in Solidarity" and another from Erin Research in Canada, which said: "This is a momentous day. We're thinking of you and the many people all over the globe who are waiting to see what today's news will bring ... it's a remarkable enterprise". It did turn out to be a momentous day and one of real solidarity. Towards late morning more and more e-mails arrived at the Women's Desk, some obviously written in great haste as coders took a few moments away from taping the news or gathering their daily newspapers to write in and express their immediate reactions to the news, or simply to express their pleasure at being involved in such a massive global exercise. "I can't believe I'm having so much fun!" exclaimed a volunteer with the Interlink Rural Information Service in Kenya.

In the Netherlands the project was clearly a big deal. A bus took a group of monitors from Hilversum to the Hague where

up to 85 people - students, journalists, women's organizations and ethnic minorities - gathered to take part in the monitoring. A press release about the project appeared in the news the next day which resulted in significant media coverage. In Fiji 11 volunteers participated; some met at the Fiji Women's Crisis Center to begin their monitoring whilst others who weren't able to attend monitored the news from their respective work places or from home.

Many universities regarded the project as an invaluable training exercise for their students. Maximiliano Duenas Guzman, a professor in communications in Puerto Rico reported: "All of my contacts were with universities and since most of the faculties saw the opportunity as one in which their students could participate, we decided that we would duplicate coverage so that each university could be involved".

Those groups with fewer numbers in their monitoring teams were not fazed by the amount of work involved. In Benin a team of two people were tackling eight newspapers, four radio and two TV channels. Neither were they put off by intermittent power cuts: "As soon as the electricity returns," wrote Nana Rosine and her coding partner Mich6e, "we will quickly run back to the exciting coding exercise".

The messages were forwarded and circulated to all of the participants, which increased the sense of global solidarity. Media Watch Canada wrote: "It's great to hear from the other countries, very exciting and we are proud to be part of this international effort". The excitement was evident from all corners of the world.

Many groups said that February 1, 2000 was a typical news day. In Spain, the top stories focused on their prime ministerial campaign, the Pinochet case, Austrian Nazis and the rape of a two-year old girl whose mother had exchanged her for drugs. In Africa and the US the news was dominated by air crashes while in the UK the face of Harold Shipman, a doctor found guilty of murdering 15 female patients, peered out of every newspaper.

Before coding had even fully got under way it was clear that the increased number of women journalists over the years has had little affect on media content and that women remain barely visible in the news unless they are victims of yet another disaster or crime.

The next step of the project is the analysis of the data, which will be carried out by Erin Research, and the preparation of preliminary results which are to be presented at Beijing +5 - the UN General Assembly's review of the Platform for Action of the 4th World Conference on Women, to be held in June.

February 1, 2000 was a memorable day and the enthusiasm and commitment shown by everyone who took part in GMMP 2000 will no doubt ensure that the results will be used in ongoing advocacy and lobbying for the democratization of media.