

# Gender and Media Summit gets under way



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More than 200 delegates from 15 SADC countries, US, India, Sweden and Kenya, and from all sectors - media practitioners, monitors and trainers, gender activists and concerned ordinary citizens - have convened today at the Kopanong Hotel in Benoni on the East Rand, for a two-day Gender and Media (GEM) Summit, amid the outcry over the lack of women's voices in media coverage and lack of women in media houses.

"This summit will provide a space for engagement and dialogue to share best practices in gender and the media in order to create a more responsive media," Kubi Rama, Gender Links research manager and women's rights campaigner, told Bizcommunity.com on the sidelines of the summit.

"The GEM gathering will also provide an opportunity for the media practitioners, gender activists, academic institutions, researchers and others to develop strategic partnerships," Rama added.

"The imbalances in statistics and portrayals of women and men in the media challenge the principles of democracy, free speech and freedom of expression. It also implies that only a segment of the population is given voice and more importantly who demand voice."

## More likely to be seen than heard

A Gender Links research project conducted in 2007 in four countries (Mauritius, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe) found that women are more likely to feature in advertising (25% of the voices) than in news content, paving the way to a heated debate that women are more likely to be seen than heard.

"Don't let the media change you, but change them instead. If more women were in power, it is more likely to make more women in the news since journalists often like to interview powerful people," Maria Edstrom, senior lecturer of journalism at the University of Gothenburg (Sweden) told the audience.

"There are big variations within regions but there are similar patterns in Europe and Africa with strong positive correlations.

"Sometimes politics is stronger, sometimes media is stronger."

Parallel sessions during which topics such as tabloidisation of media, media policy regulation, media practice and training and media literacy, media activism and community media are expected to be discussed today, thus providing strategic and rare networking opportunities for delegates to assess the seriousness of women's concerns and find ways to solving them.

Under the banner “Whose news, whose views, critical citizens, responsive media”, the summit will also include keynote addresses by international speakers and local experts in the field of gender, media and diversity.

For more information, go to [www.genderlinks.org.za](http://www.genderlinks.org.za) and [www.whomakesthenews.org](http://www.whomakesthenews.org).

## ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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