Women in News Summit

"We must keep women media professionals within the media sector". This was the message received by the more than 50 participants attending the 3rd Annual WAN-IFRA Women in News Summit in Lusaka, Zambia, this week, which brought together women from the media industry in Botswana, Namibia and Zambia for a three-day event.

"I have been overwhelmed by the commitment to newspapers shown by these women, who often work under challenging conditions," said Cherilyn Ireton, executive director of the World Editors Forum, who contributed to the event.

"Their energy and passion is visible and inspiring and I am proud to be connected to this meaningful project, which is helping so many towards a better future within media," she said. "Our challenge, as an industry, is to try to ensure that we keep them within the media sector".

Ireton joined leading editor Wade Williams of *FrontPage Africa* of Liberia, South African expert media management trainer Paula Fray, and Zambia's *The Post* editor-in-chief and publisher Fred M'membe at the summit, which marked the conclusion of the third year of the innovative Women in News capacity building programme organised by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA).

Amos Malupenga, the Zambian permanent secretary of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services, opened the summit, which included training sessions on media management and business strategy, a leadership panel on 'following your passion', keynote addresses, networking and much more.

M'membe shared the following advice to the audience: "Never get tired of learning and talking about what you are doing. It gets dark sometimes, but then the morning comes. Don't give up hope," he said. "There is no job on *The Post*, including sweeping the floor and travelling with drivers of our newspaper trucks, that I have not done. I am a complete newspaper person."

Women in News programme

The Women in News programme seeks to address the critical issue of gender parity in the African media industry by equipping women media professionals with the skills, strategies and confidence to move to greater levels of decision making within their media companies. In Southern Africa, women comprise only 23% of top management, and of the population professionally qualified for management positions, only 31% are women.

Launched in 2010 in Botswana, Namibia and Zambia, the programme goes beyond traditional approaches to media development by incorporating professional development techniques such as career coaching, facilitated networking and peer mentoring into a robust capacity building curriculum.

To date, 50 high-potential women from both the editorial and business side of newspapers have benefited from the programme, which is both long-term, high-impact and above all, focused on sustainability through a dedication to instilling local ownership. The model has also served as a basis for other WAN-IFRA media development programmes in other markets, proving to be both effective and highly adaptable to new markets and audiences.

Women in News is part of an ambitious strategic partnership between WAN-IFRA and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) to advance media development and press freedom worldwide. The partnership allows WAN-IFRA to broaden and develop its press freedom and media development activities to support free and financially sustainable media worldwide.

For more, go to www.wan-ifra.org/microsites/media-development.

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