

WHY IS GENDER IMPORTANT IN NEWS REPORTING?

Tumelo Mabula shared that females in South Africa represented 54% of the population.

"According to Statistics South Africa (2017), more than five out of ten (51,6%) poor households in South Africa were headed by females, whereas those by males accounted for 48,4 percent," he said.

He said that Statistics South Africa reported that women were more affected by unemployment. He said women also suffered in the hands of violent men, with 40-50% having reported being assaulted by a partner.

"According to the CSVR, a study involving a random selection of women in South Africa concluded that 24.6% have experienced some kind of physical assault from their current partners.

"Too often most of the perpetrators of violence are male," he said.

Mabula questioned some of the issues that have gained popularity within gender narrative circles.

"What about abused men? There is a generalisation that mostly women are mostly affected by HIV and AIDS and are the ones to look after those who are affected by the disease. Is this the case?"

Mabula said while women were expected to vote in their numbers during elections, none of the election manifestos touched much on gender-based violence.

"A quick glance at the discussion documents of the 5th ANC National Policy Conference does not touch on gender-based violence specifically. The discussion document on social transformation

mentions women in relation to economic empowerment," he said.

Mabula also took issue with Maseko's choice of song for the opening of the forum the previous day.

He said the choice of song, Shosholozza, came from an era where the struggle against apartheid was masculinised and turned into a male struggle, even though women and children were affected during those volatile times on South African soil.

"On Day One Mr. Maseko opened the session with the song 'Shosholozza.' Shosholozza is a Ndebele folk song that originated in what is now Zimbabwe but was popularised in South Africa. It was sung by Ndebele all-male migrant workers that were working in the South African mines in a call and response style.

Gendered language include words that assume connections between jobs or roles and gender like 'policeman'

"The song is so popular in South African culture that it is often referred to as South Africa's second national anthem. The choice of song was questionable. Why couldn't we open with a song by Beyoncé? Is it because she is not a man?" Mabula said.

Are men dying in silence?

Mabula requested the members of the forum to reflect on their feelings. He said women seem to talk more with one another than men do.

- Is this the case? If so, why?
- Why do men feel alienated?
- Why do men feel under siege?
- Are all (black) men violent monsters?
- Are there male victims of femicide or a term for it?



Jimmy Masombuka (Mpumalanga Press), Mthokozisi Hlatshwayo (Inhloso Yesizwe) and Dunisani Ntsanwisi (Nthavela and AIP board member)

Touching on Phamodi's presentation, Mabula explained the difference between sex, gender and gender socialisation.

Sex: a biological condition, i.e. defined as a set of physical characteristics.

Gender: a social construct (within the fields of cultural and gender studies, and the social sciences).

Gender socialisation: the tendency for boys and girls to be socialised differently.

"Boys are raised to conform to the male gender role, and girls are raised to conform to the female gender or role. A gender role is a set of behaviours, attitudes, and personality characteristics expected and encouraged of a person based on his or her sex," said Mabula.

Reporting on gender should be approached from two dimensions, said Mabula.

- 1.1. Operational level (production of news)
- 2.2. Institutional level (structure of news organisations)

"To what extent do your biases on gender influence the content you produce? How often do you publish stories on male victims of gender-based vio-

lence? How do institutional challenges impact content production? How do you balance budget constraints versus newsworthiness?" Mabula said.

How do publishers deal with gendered language?

"You have probably encountered documents that use masculine nouns and pronouns to refer to subjects whose gender is unclear or variable, or to groups that contain people who are not actually men. For example, the U.S. Declaration of Independence states that 'all men are created equal.'

"Other common instances of gendered language include words that assume connections between jobs or roles and gender like 'policeman' and language conventions that differ depending on the gender of the person being discussed.

Mabula said gendered language sidelined women in news reports.

"Gendered language is the way the titles Mr, Miss, and Mrs are used. Mr can refer to any man, regardless of whether he is single or married, but Miss and Mrs define women by whether they are married, which until quite recently meant defining them by their relationships with men.

POINTERS TO WAY FORWARD

- Be aware of our biases
- Proactively use gender-neutral language
- Acknowledge our privilege and proactively address issues relating to patriarchy
- Reinvent masculinity
- Become agents of gender resocialisation