

WAW! High-Level Panel Discussion 1 "Media and Contents to Nurture Diversity"

Background and Issues

In recent years, movements which promote diversity in the media have become active in the world. The words and contents delivered by the media have been checked whether there include any expression which may lead to unconscious gender discriminations. Some countries have set restrictions on advertisements which lack in respect towards diversity and/or could lead to entrenched ideas about rigid gender roles. At the G7 Summit 2018 in Charlevoix, the leaders committed to ending sexual and gender-based violence, abuse and harassment in digital contexts.

In the high-level round table "Gender in the Media" at the WAW! 2017, participants discussed what caused the stereotypical images of women on television and web commercials, and how to prevent growing unconscious bias of rigid gender roles. In the discussion, they pointed out that the media industry needed to change its long-working-hours culture. They also encouraged women's full participation at all levels including decision-making positions and to create a better work environment which enables all people to engage equally. The participants at the round table also mentioned that the media influence has possibilities to change gender stereotypes, for example by using the wording "sharing housework" instead of "helping with housework," and delivering a message that both mothers and fathers take parental leave.

Recently, the characters and stories that are directed towards the younger generation in the media such as TV drama series, cartoons and manga, which defy the traditional gender roles are earning positive reputations. In this age of progressing social media and the rapid growth of various tools to express our opinion, viewer's reactions spread faster and more widely than ever before. On the other hand, there is a backlash from some viewers who feel uncomfortable with more progressive ways of thinking and changes to the gender roles that are presented by the media. Also some parents are confused what to tell their children about these progressive ideas of diversity when people's values and beliefs are undergoing a big change from the past status quo.

As the needs and lifestyles in our world are constantly changing and diversifying, various media devices have been developed. As a result of that, people have no more shared common values with many others. The diversity of life styles and values may bring us a clash with different ideas which are difficult to sympathize or understand. The media is able to pick up the opinions of minorities, focus on different perspectives, and also visualize the backgrounds and histories where those opinions or perspective derived from. Hence the media is the important tool to learn to respect different values and lifestyle choices, and at the same time the media is needed to be a leader to form a new set of values towards a new diverse society. This agenda is closely linked to the Goal 5 (Gender equality) and Goal 10 (Reduced inequalities) of the SDGs.

Topics

- How should the media and its contents be to prevent to form gender stereotypes and to foster diversity?
- Good practices of the media that changed stereotypes by words and/or contents?
- How should we handle the situation of flooding negative criticisms and backlash?
- What should the viewers do to media contents which will possibly promote unconscious gender bias? How can they acquire media literacy skills?
- What does the media have to do to be sensitive with social changes and diversity of the viewers and opinions, and reflect them in an appropriate way? How can we secure diversity including promoting women's participation in decision-making level in the media industry?
- How should we tackle sexual and gender based violence, exploitation, abuse and harassment on the internet?