

# FOREWORD

It is sometimes said that talk is cheap, and that what really counts is action.

But words are not always cheap. People often pay a high personal cost for what they say – including when they dare to speak out in favour of gender equality.

Such high-cost speech is especially valuable in the face of other kinds of speech, which are unfortunately increasingly common, where words (and images) incite and normalise discrimination and violence against women and girls.

This is why the Position Papers in this book dealing with key policy issues are so vital. They constitute brave statements in a difficult climate. Every voice in favour of gender equality matters, and the ones featured here have the power to help change society.

Even without action, words are key components for progressive norms. Without them there is no beacon for policy to aspire to, nor a standard to use for assessing practice.

The contributions to this book help precisely to illuminate the beacon we need. They signal how we can benchmark what is happening on the ground.

To the extent that the words in these Position Papers also serve a purpose of “preaching to the converted”, let’s recall that it is always important to strengthen morale. And at the same time, the contents in these pages go further than inspiration and reinforcement.

The contributors systematically, and holistically, unpack a range of dimensions – each and every one of which is relevant to the quest for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 for the world to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”.

The deadline for humanity to get to this milestone is 2030, and much remains to be done.

This is why UNESCO continues to champion gender equality as a global priority in all its work. It is also why the Organization's specialised media development programme, the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), has co-funded the production of this book.

It was under the leadership of the then IPDC Chair, Albana Shala, in 2017, that funds were allocated via a financial contribution from The Netherlands. That support led to an international joining of forces inside the Global Alliance for Media and Gender (GAMAG) to identify the topics and commission the experts to deliver the Position Papers. GAMAG is the result of an initiative of UNESCO that now has a life of its own. See [gamag.net](http://gamag.net)

In producing the contents of this book, many of the authors took part in sessions at the Commission on the Status of Women at the UN General Assembly in March 2018. Besides impacting on the talks and their outcomes, the collective also convened a special panel to present their drafts and gain peer feedback.

The Position Papers that now see the light of day show us how to tackle the gaps between fine-sounding policies and actual practices, between words and implementation.

What they show is that if implementation is flawed, then there may have been flaws in the basic policy – due inter alia to knowledge gaps that led to substantive obstacles being overlooked. This insight, along with others in the Papers, helps us to bridge talk with action.

This is because we have here a resource that unpacks the complexity and thereby allows for strategic policies and programmes to be effective in advancing gender equality in media and through media (including social media). Governments, companies, NGOs, academia, individuals all have a huge contribution to make – together and in the space of their own efficacy. No single actor can do it alone in these digital times. For its part, UNESCO has undertaken many actions to support the quest for gender equality in and through media (see Appendix to this book). Amongst other initiatives, UNESCO created

and has promoted worldwide the Gender Sensitive-Indicators for Media (GSIM) to help produce knowledge for change.

A significant step was taken in 2018 when the IPDC gave the green light to new UNESCO indicators to assess the Internet. This is a framework with strong gender considerations throughout.

Called the Internet Universality Indicators (IUIs), this framework complements the Position Papers here. It opens up the doors for gender-sensitive analysis, on a per country-basis, of the most influential communications facility of our era.

In this way, both the Position Papers, the GSIM and the IUIs hold the promise to empower us to understand fast-moving digital developments.

Together, they can provide the knowledge for words to be a springboard for action. For designing information and communications policies that work – for governments, in companies and other institutions, and even for and by individuals.

Policies that help to realize SDG 5 – and SDG 16 target 10 which calls for “public access to information and fundamental freedoms”.

This is our opportunity to help ensure gender equality in public access to information and fundamental freedoms. If we fail, sustainable development fails.

*Guy Berger*

*Secretary of IPDC*

*GMMP: Global Media Monitoring Project*

*VAW: Violence Against Women*

*VAWG: Violence Against Women and Girls*

*UNESCO: United Nations Scientific, Educational and Cultural Organisation*