



Women in Community Publishing Forum

LISTEN TO ME

14-16 February 2017



Contents



Introduction.....	3
Opening the space	3
Creating the space.....	3
Group discussion.....	4
4.1 Women	4
4.2 Content.....	6
4.3 Business.....	6
4.4 Health and Wellness.....	7
4.5 Training and development.....	8
4.6 Language	8
4.7 Digital	8
Closing the space and mapping the way forward	9
Panel discussion.....	10
Summary of recommendations.....	14

Sponsors



Written by
Jayshree
Pather

Photographs by
Ndileka
Lujabe

Compiled by
Louise Vale and
Ntando Nkuna

Designed by
Theuns
Kruger

Printed by
Typo Colour Printing
Specialists (Pty) Ltd

Women in Community Publishing Forum

Introduction

The Association of Independent Publishers (AIP) is a national organisation advancing the interests of the independent grassroots print media sector in South Africa. Established in 2004, the AIP has about 250 members nationally, all of whom are small, independent publishers. AIP held a historic gathering on 15 and 16 February 2017 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Johannesburg – the first Women in Community Publishing Forum. The purpose was to create a space for women publishers to discuss issues of mutual concern. The forum brought together 44 women, all from AIP member publications and representing a broad provincial mix on the first day and 64 women on the second day including funders and other guests. The forum was funded by the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA), Times Media (TM) and Media24

Opening the space



Mbali Dhlomo

Mbali Dhlomo, AIP president

welcomed everyone to the first day of the forum. She expressed her delight that such an exciting and historic gathering was taking place. Mbali explained that the theme of the forum was “listen to me, listen to me as a woman who is often not recognised for her contribution” and invited participants to express themselves

freely noting that such occasions were rare because “men’s voices always go over our voices”. She emphasized that the forum was an opportunity to celebrate women publishers and for AIP to show that women were a force to be reckoned with as well as to find different and unique solutions to the challenges women in independent publishing faced.



Louise Vale

Louise Vale, AIP director outlined the programme for the forum and urged participants to talk about why they were in the media; their goals, their passions and problems. The first day was an open space for participants to raise issues and the second day was a panel discussion arising from requests to AIP to find motivational women who have succeeded in the industry and business generally. She explained that AIP wanted



to create a space where everyone could express themselves without feeling they were being observed, so visitors and guests were only invited for the second day. She explained that the proceedings would be recorded through photographs, a video of the panel discussion and a report documenting the proceedings. She stressed that everything was confidential and participants would vet the report.

Creating the space

The key principles of open space methodology and the process was then explained.

Four principles of open space:

- Whenever it starts is the right time.
- Whoever comes are the right people.
- Whatever happens is the only thing that could have happened.
- When it’s over, it’s over.

The law of two feet:

- If ever you find yourself in a place where you are no longer able to learn or to contribute, you owe it yourself and to others to move to a place where you are able.
- Be a butterfly or a bumble-bee.

Using two methods – the village market place and community bulletin board – participants identified issues, took responsibility for facilitating and recorded the discussions giving them full ownership over the process. The final session of the day was an opportunity to reflect on the process.



Group

A short clustering exercise yielded the following themes for group discussion:

- Women
- Business
- Content
- Health and wellness
- Digital and online
- Training and development

Participants were encouraged to move around and explore at least three topics.

Women

Participants discussed the need to engage with 'feminism' (and not be afraid to use the word) and issues of power and acknowledged that religion, society and culture shaped the messages women got. The "bring-her down-syndrome" where women criticize other women for their physical features and having to constantly prove that you are capable were identified as concerns, especially for young women.

The role women publishers could play in covering gender issues in their publications, including profiling women leaders in the communities, was highlighted as an important contribution to challenging perceptions that women leaders are submissive and passive.

Sexual abuse - within and outside the industry - was identified as an issue needing urgent attention including the need to end stigma and break the silence. Messages that women (especially young women) got told include "Be the face of my firm, wear your mini-



Marinda van der Walt from *Gansbaai Courant*, Valerie Kemp from *GPS News*, Trudy Ngwenya of *Soweto Bulletin*, Anetta Mangxaba of *Dizindaba News* and Zandile Mankayi from *Cosmo City-Chronicle*.

discussion

skirts”.

Finding a balance between work versus home was also noted as a challenge.

Suggestions / recommendations

- Establish a network of women mentors, including across the generational divide.
- Establish a syndication platform to share, discuss and publish women’s stories.
- Hold an annual women’s conference – either in March (to commemorate International Women’s Day) or in August (to commemorate Women’s Day), to measure milestones.
- Establish a gender desk in AIP for as a safe space where women can raise their concerns. This has staffing (and resource) implications as AIP has three staff members so this will need to be well-thought through. Cindi volunteered to work on this.



Caroline Ritcher & Phillipa Gordon of *Meander Chronicle*



Beauchachia Hurst of *Sports Eye News* and Zinhle Hlatshwako of *Orange Farm Poortjie Indaba*

- Develop a gender policy to look at sexual harassment in the workplace. 'Nobody cares how we are abused.'
- Start a Facebook page for AIP women (including the LGBTBIQ community) to provide support and advice to each other, a space to vent and share articles to motivate and inspire, and support women with business issues. Rushana and Heather volunteered to work on this.



Noxolo Gadini of *Ihlumelo News*



Beverly Mortimer of *St Francis Chronicle* and Octavia Hlungwani of *Orange Farm Poortjie Indaba*

Content

Participants felt that publishers must have content that reflects women better and which gives grassroots women voices and recognition. "Women should be celebrated and given space in our newspapers, content should show women are capable of everything they put their minds to and profiles of women from communities' show 'unsung heroes'".

The importance of educational and motivational stories to help readers solve problems was emphasized as was the importance of good content built through developing sources in the the community, police, and the municipality.

Participants felt that women empowerment was necessary in the publishing industry and underlined the importance of a support structure for women as a tried and tested measure. They felt that more forums that gave voice to women were needed.

Business

Participants stressed the importance of a business approach including investing money back into the business, hiring the right people (with the same vision) and having a say in the running of the business.



Pamela Timakwe of *Eastern Cape Women's magazine* and Beverly Mortimer



Sheila Mhlongo, publisher of six isiZulu newspapers, talking to fellow publishers on how she managed to stay in the business for more than 15 years.

Contracting and staffing also received a lot of attention. This included building in a probation period into staff contracts, having a training and induction plan and offering long-term employees partnership options in the business.

Participants expressed the need for an open-door policy with government and that MDDA board members should be experienced in running small newspapers, and suggested that funders be equipped with proper financial tools.

Health and Wellness

Based on a quick poll on exercise and healthy living amongst participants, only three out of 13 exercised regularly and ate healthily. The importance of a balanced diet, exercise and talking care of oneself emotionally and physically were all emphasized. The high levels of work pressure that leads to high stress levels was a key concern.



Lerato Mahlangu from *Loxion News*



Patricia Hlungwani of *Alex Pioneer* and MDDA Khululwa Seyisi-Tom, also chips into the conversation of business and funding.

Financial stress was cited as a problem – caused by advertisers paying late or not having sufficient cash reserves to pay for printing costs.

The importance of delegating work and reducing time spent on personal social media were recommendations to reduce stress.

Participants emphasised the importance of respecting one another and felt that consideration of different personalities and different cultural/religious preferences would lead to an improved working environment.

“Women’s voices are in their stories.”

Suggestions / recommendations

- Explore the possibility of a collective health insurance for grassroots publishers. Publishers need a contingency fund/plan to supplement or cover current medical bills.
- AIP should undertake research and speak to financial service providers to obtain information on packages that can assist.



Octavia Hlungwani, Anetta Mangxaba from *Dizindaba News* and Nomvula Maseko from *Isibane Somphakathi*



Heather Cousins of *Skawara News*



Nonceba Xezu of *Khanyisa News* sharing the importance of staying relevant online.

Training and development

Participants felt more thought should be given to determining what skills and training is needed given that small publishers wore many hats (e.g. photography, sales, marketing, finance and management).

Some training areas identified included:

- Digital training
- Graphic design
- Understanding the industry and competition issues in the print industry.

Suggestions / recommendations

- Establish a site or platform to share skills digitally and syndicate stories.

Language



Pamela Timakwe

Participants argued that mother tongue, indigenous publications were not promoted and supported enough. Dealing with clients or sources who spoke a different language and the challenges of incorporating into an online platform were some of the challenges identified.

Digital

This group discussed the importance of new technologies and platforms and to avoid using social media in silos. The advantages of social media for infographics, graphs and pie-charts to show key information and memes were also highlighted including the importance of knowing reach and audience.

Some of the participants shared their experiences with digital and social media. *Khanyisa News* got 33 000 likes on Facebook, another got 11 000 likes on Facebook for a story and readership of one publication increased to 83,000 after they set up a Facebook page. Others were using YouTube to post videos and using their webpage or Facebook for overflow stories

The importance of combined campaigns on multiple platforms (digital, radio and print) was also discussed. Some publishers have partnered with community radio stations in their area while others have partnered with universities on special events and supplements in the paper.

Some publishers were using digital to save print costs and while some have not made money yet, they have seen their engagement with readers increase. Publishers were sceptical of online sales as the focus seemed to be focused on selling products rather than advertising and were also concerned that the loss of hard copy would lead to the loss of loyal readers.

Suggestions / recommendations

- AIP should run a workshop on social and digital media and bring in experts from *City Press* and others.



Moitheri Tsotetsi, *Bua Sedibeng*, leading the group discussion

Closing the space and mapping the way forward

As a final reflection, participants discussed the ideas and suggestions that emerged during the group discussions to address the question 'what are we going to do?' The strong message that emerged is "We are our sister's keeper".

- Set up a mentoring network for women publishers.
- AIP to create a women-only space/platform to vent, advise each other and share articles. Lerato and Cindi will work on this.
- Rusana and Heather to set-up a Facebook page where members can meet daily.
- Mbali to look at a health and welfare policy.
- Share contact details of participants.
- Establish a national women's platform to syndicate stories.
- Heather and Asana to set up an email group

Mbali closed the session by thanking everyone for their participation.



Sindisiwe Buthelezi from *Ezakwazulu News*



Rusana Philander from *Cape Flats News*

Panel discussion

Mbali Dhlomo, AIP Chairperson welcomed everyone to the second day of the forum and explained that the panel consisted of motivational women speakers who were invited to share their knowledge, wisdom and experience. She then handed over to Jayshree Pather who chaired the rest of the session.

Jayshree Pather introduced herself as an independent researcher, trainer and campaigner whose interest in community media began

when she joined the MDDA as its first project director in 2006. She invited each of the five panellists to make opening remarks. Please see appendix one for the programme.

Neo Momodu, head of Corporate Affairs at Media24 has a LLB (Hons). Her previous work experience includes four years as Chief Director at GCIS, Primedia in 1996 and at SABC in 2003.

She spoke about being raised in a family of political activists and a



Mbali Dhlomo introduces the second day



Jayshree Pather, Panel Chair and rapporteur of the conference.



Myesha Jenkins, cultural activist and poet

childhood characterised by constant harassment and brutality by the apartheid security forces. And though suffering and disadvantages were realities for most women, she emphasized hope and victory in overcoming these obstacles.

Neo also spoke about how her exposure to books and reading at a very early age led her to understand that the world was bigger than apartheid, bigger than South Africa and showed her successful and influential black role models like Malcolm X, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Maya Angelou.

She found entering the corporate world difficult “as a black woman you are told success doesn’t look you, success doesn’t dress like you. And what happens? All your dreams are just shattered. You just go under the radar”

In her view, the reason so few black people (especially black women) succeeded in corporate South Africa was because of a failure to understand differences in style between men and women. The other reason was the expectation that black women would fail.

She argued that corporate SA was not digging deeply enough to uncover why women were not making more strides and called for

more research and data to understand the challenges women face.

She talked about the clash between family and work life priorities and the extreme work and household demands that drained women and her observation that men prioritised more effectively whereas women tried to do everything.

Her concluding remarks focused on the importance of planning and determination because life was not easy so “you have that chutzpah, that spirit inside you that drives you to make a plan and go out and get it irrespective of the obstacles.”

Myesha Jenkins is a feminist, immigrant and activist who hails from California. She writes and performs poetry and she was awarded the Mkobodo Award for Women in the Arts (Poetry) in 2013. She currently runs writing workshops with women and girls on creativity and imagination.

Myesha started off by reading one of her poems ‘I come from woman’. Her theme was a motto by Sojourner Truth, a woman who led many people out of slavery in America: “don’t stop, keep going, don’t look back”.



Neo Momodu, head of corporate affairs, Media24

She related her experiences of coming to South Africa as an immigrant and the diversity of her experience – from programme officer for a donor organisation to a tour guide and writing poetry to illustrate her message about re-creating oneself.

She ended her remarks by reminding young women that they had many careers that would come out of what they were currently doing. At the age of 70, she still had plans to write her third book, work on a jazz anthology and create a women's writing retreat.

Sue Grant Marshall is a multi-award winning journalist who has co-authored two books, *Mind the Gap* and *Mind over Money*. She held senior editorial positions at *The Star* and *The Argus* and worked for several women's magazines including *Fair Lady* and *Woman and Home*. Sue also hosted a talk show on Capital Radio for two years. She gained entry to *The Argus* cadet school where she was the only woman (out of fourteen), by following her instincts and walking into The Argus office and demanding to be taken to the editor.

She was inspired to keep writing and giving a voice to those who did not have a voice after her best friend's brother, Neil Agget, was tortured to death by the police. She appealed to participants as independent women in media to use their voice for women in the community to make themselves heard saying "In those communities, you are the voice".



Sue Grant Marshall, multi-award winning journalist and the first women reporter in the *Cape Argus* newsroom

She talked about the sexual harassment she faced in the newsroom and how she learnt to assert herself as an individual and stand up to intimidation and harassment by men.

Her concluding remarks focused on using the power of the media to deal with corruption which has so endemic in our society. She appealed to community publishers to recognise the power they held and not to give in pressure not to publish stories but instead to "Go filter out these rivulets and streams in your community. Listen to the stories of every single person from a petrol attendant or the president, reflect it and lead".

Mahlatse Gallens was recently appointed chairperson of the South African National Editor's Forum (SANEF). She is the political editor at News24 and previously worked as deputy political editor at SABC, in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Kenya. She hails from Limpopo and studied at the Cape Peninsula Technicon.

Mahlatse asked why was it that the story of women (largely portrayed as victims in the news) was still the same even though there were women publishers and editors. She also questioned how many stories where women broke through the ceiling dominated our papers.

She urged participants to use occasions like to make a concerted effort so that the story of women would change. She mentioned Ferial Haffajee's 'black book of women sources' as an important tool to find



Mahlatse Gallens, political editor News24 and director of SANEF

women analysts and commentators.

She urged participants to have a conversation about how the book of women sources can be further developed and expanded. She acknowledged that it was not easy because women were struggling to find their voice and that even when the newsroom tried to find women leaders, women were not willing to speak.

Mahlatse ended her comments by encouraging community publishers to tell the stories of women were doing great things under very difficult circumstances in the community and to encourage these women to become part of the think-tank of the country.

Phillippa Yaa de Villiers is an award-winning writer and performing artist both nationally and internationally with an interest in race, sexuality and class and gender in South Africa. She studied journalism at Rhodes University and studied mime and theatre in Paris. She worked as an actor and script-writer for *Takalani Sesame* and *Soul City*.

Phillippa spoke about identity and the importance of going beyond what we look like to uncover who we really are. She was given up for adoption at birth and raised by a white family. It was only when the adoption laws changed in South Africa that she found out about her birth parents and her African side.

She spoke about how the struggle against apartheid helped her find herself and gave her something to believe in. She also urged



Phillippa Yaa de Villiers, poet, actor and lecturer in creative writing at Wits

participants to be careful around messages that tell women that they are wrong (for example, the 'sugar-daddy' syndrome) because it is a reality for many women and they should not be cut out.

To conclude, Phillippa quoted Don Mattera: "wherever you are going, look around and see who you can take with you" and credited all the opportunities she had been given to the women like Myesha Jenkins who were willing to support and nurture young women. She implored participants to take their community with them even though it went against the whole corporate world where it is all about personal interest and the individual. She ended off with another poem.

The panel was followed by a lively discussion of questions and comments from participants and the opportunity for the panellists to respond. Pamela Timakwe (*Eastern Cape Women's Magazine*), Manana Monareng Stone (*Comm-Train*) and Tiisetso Mowa (*The Eye News*) also read their poems adding to the atmosphere.

Mbali Dhlomo and Louise Vale closed the session by thanking the panelists for sharing their time and insights and wished those travelling a safe journey back.

Summary of recommendations

- Establish a network of women mentors, including across the generational divide.
- Establish a national women's platform to syndicate stories.
- Hold an annual women's conference – either in March (to commemorate International Women's Day) or in August (to commemorate Women's Day), to measure milestones.
- Establish a gender desk in AIP for as a safe space where women can raise their concerns. This has staffing (and resource) implications as AIP has three staff members so will need to be well-thought through. Cindi and Lerato volunteered to work on this.
- Develop a gender policy to look at sexual harassment in the workplace. 'Nobody cares how we are abused.'
- Start a Facebook page for AIP women to provide support and advice to each other, a space to vent and share articles to motivate and inspire, and support women with business issues. The importance of ensuring the LGBTI sector was also represented was also discussed. Rushana and Heather volunteered to work on this.
- Explore the possibility of a collective health insurance for grassroots publishers. Publishers need a contingency fund/plan where a certain amount could be put away to supplement or cover current medical bills. Mbali will look at a health and welfare policy. AIP should undertake some research and speak to financial service providers to obtain information on packages that can assist.
- AIP to run a workshop on social and digital media and bring in experts from *City Press* and others.
- Heather and Rusana to set up an email group.
- Share contact details of participants.







**ASSOCIATION OF
INDEPENDENT PUBLISHERS**

Tel: (011) 713 9614

Email: info.aip@printmedia.org.za

Facebook: Association of Independent Publishers (page)

Twitter: @aip_sa

Website: www.aip.org.za