Insights and recommendations for positive media portrayal of women leadership:

An analysis of personal experiences and perceptions of the public and media towards women leaders.

A formative study report for
the development of a positive perception communication strategy

for Akina Mama wa Africa

June 27, 2022

Report Outline

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To deliberate on and provide inputs and comments to validate and enrich the report on Insights and recommendations for positive media portrayal of women leadership.
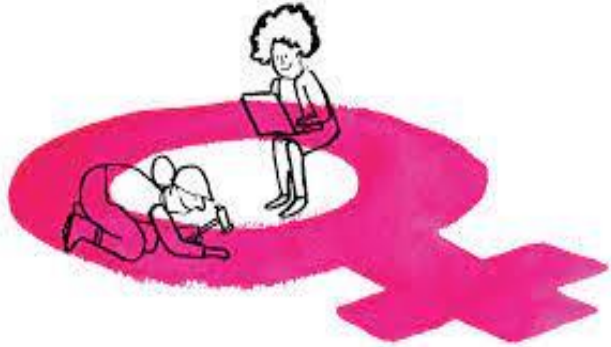
Purpose of the Study

- Understand media portrayal of female youths and women in leadership;
- Document the influence of the media on the women in leadership trajectory;
- Analyze the editorial policies of traditional media house for gender and social inclusion; and
- Identify key insights and recommendations to inform the communication strategy.

To inform AMwA's positive perception communication strategy, which is a part the Democratic Governance Facility supported project: "Strengthening women's leadership and influence in political processes in Uganda".
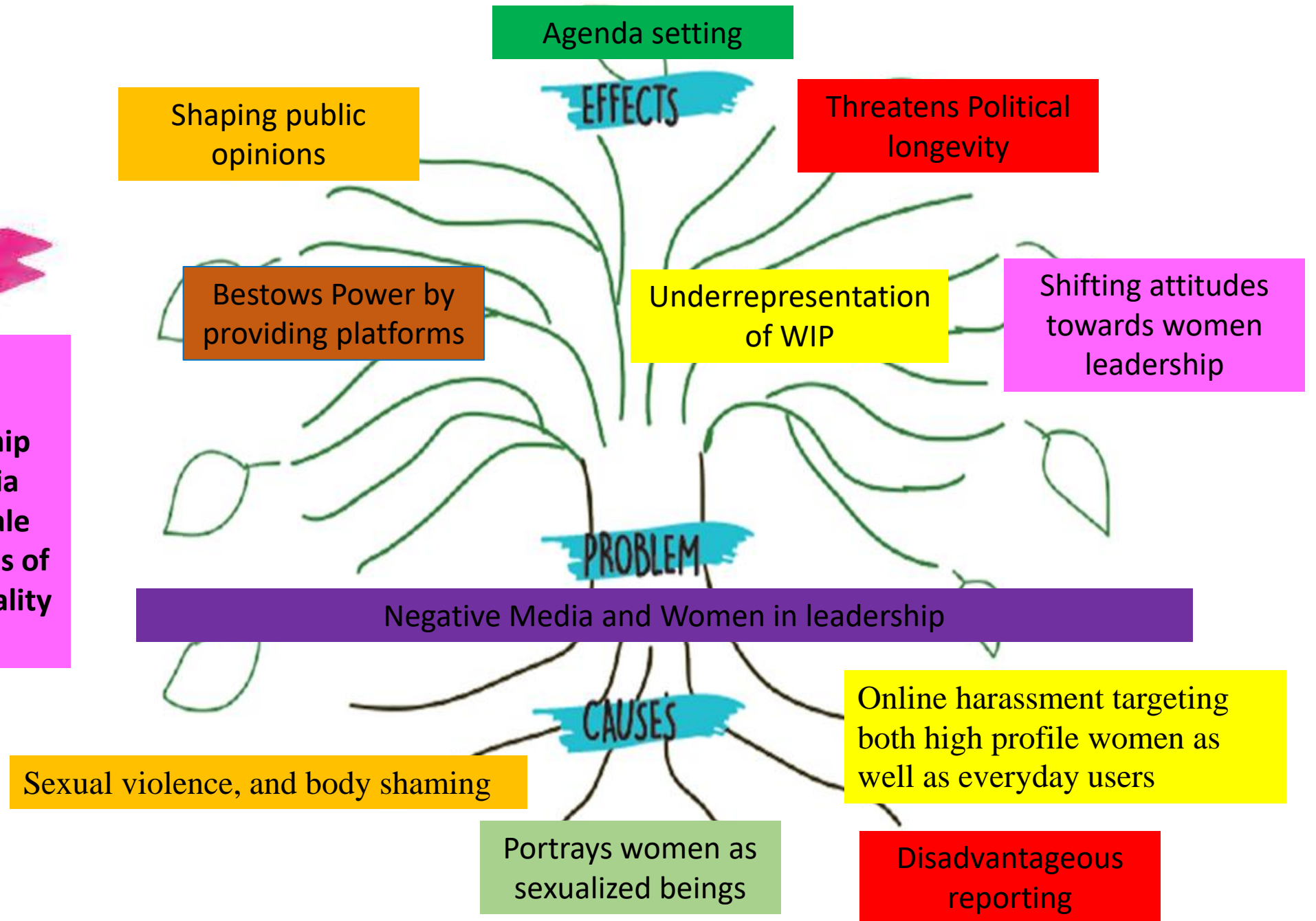
Specifically, AMwA will apply the strategy to engage the print, broadcasting and social media platforms to effectively document women leaders' stories, improve public perception, support and appreciation, and media portrayal of women leadership.

The big question:

Do women in leadership receive different media coverage than their male colleagues, both in terms of the quantity and the quality of the coverage.?

Agenda setting

EFFECTS

Shaping public opinions

Threatens Political longevity

Bestows Power by providing platforms

Underrepresentation of WIP

Shifting attitudes towards women leadership

PROBLEM

Negative Media and Women in leadership

CAUSES

Online harassment targeting both high profile women as well as everyday users

Sexual violence, and body shaming

Portrays women as sexualized beings

Disadvantageous reporting

Media Facts in Uganda

Uganda has 23.9 million internet users

Increase in mobile phone penetration which stood at 30.2 million subscribers

Eighteen percent of the accounts belonging to women experienced sexual violence compared to 8 percent of those belonging to men. (Policy Report 2021).

There are 300 licensed radio stations and 30 (free to air) TV stations serving an estimated population of 42.9 million

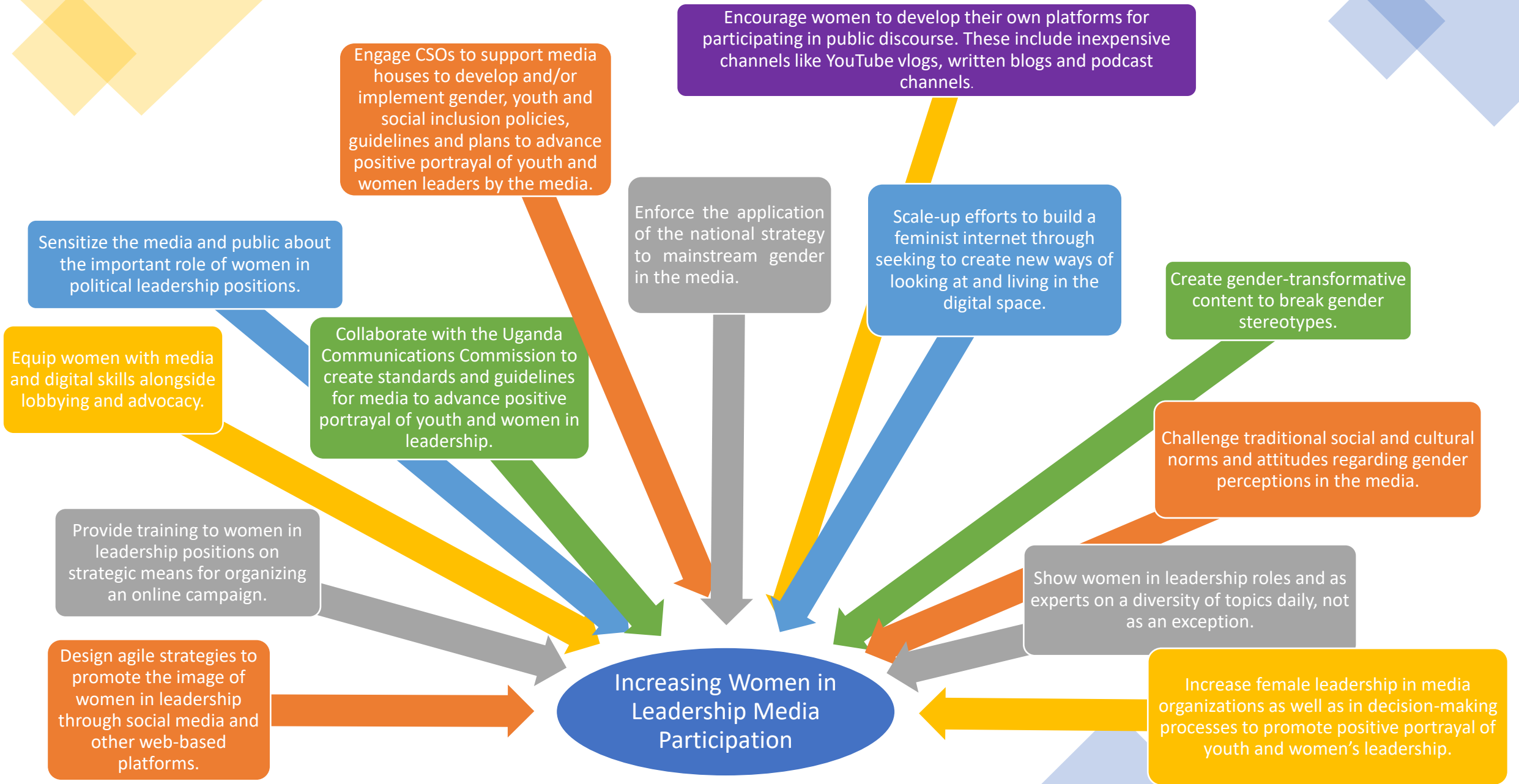Radio is a more popular medium than TV especially in rural areas.

Findings

Variables	Findings
Diversity in Media	- Radio is more popular than TV. - Increase in internet access and social media will reduce the radio audience - Print circulation for the Uganda newspaper is all falling
Policy frameworks for women in leadership participation	- Uganda is signatory to several international, regional and national laws and policies that advance the participation of women in public leadership, affirmative action and liberalization of the media - Increased number of women in leadership and decision-making
Non- practical editorial and guidelines	- Policies commit to gender, youth, and social inclusion. The policies require journalists and editors to uphold the principles of truth, objectivity, fairness and respect for all viewers and sources of information, and to balance as well as impartial reporting and non-discrimination against any person - Translation into practice is still limited
Social perceptions about women leaders reflect a patriarchal society	- Social perception still affect the leaders' self-perceptions, credibility and confidence. - The media content mirrors these perceptions. - The media tend to elaborate and focus on gender issues of women leaders, and are more likely than men to be featured as victims in news stories - The unfounded belief that men are better at articulating issues in public more than the women greatly affects and creates a bias towards women political leaders backed by media portrayal.
Increasing cyber harassment on WIP	- Cyberbullying has become a key barrier for female youths and women in leadership to engage on social media spaces.
Women leaders can achieve positive media portrayals through a protracted process	- Some women leaders have effectively engaged the media and received positive media coverage. Putting in place media teams, maintaining social media profiles, developing effective communication skills, and understanding key socio-political issues are some of the drivers of positive media presence.

"Ahh media with women issues.... We are the center of focus...! and in most cases in a negative perspective. I can give my personal experience. I remember I wanted to stand as MP, but the media was supported by public rumors to negatively say bad things about me. E.g. how can this "Ka Woman" stand for the position of a man. Questions in the media were like: leaving her seat and disturbing the man's peace. Still at the same time, when media heard of my intentions to marry in another district, they portrayed my picture that now I want to run away from my community to another community. This greatly affected my campaigns and eventually I did not go through. In Parliament, if one is not careful with their statements and friendship with male counterparts, no matter what you say or do with women in parliament, media quickly picks only negative aspects".

Hon. Naome Kabasharira,
Member of 11th Parliament Rushenyi County Ntungamo district.

Recommendations

Engage CSOs to support media houses to develop and/or implement gender, youth and social inclusion policies, guidelines and plans to advance positive portrayal of youth and women leaders by the media.

Encourage women to develop their own platforms for participating in public discourse. These include inexpensive channels like YouTube vlogs, written blogs and podcast channels.

Sensitize the media and public about the important role of women in political leadership positions.

Enforce the application of the national strategy to mainstream gender in the media.

Scale-up efforts to build a feminist internet through seeking to create new ways of looking at and living in the digital space.

Create gender-transformative content to break gender stereotypes.

Equip women with media and digital skills alongside lobbying and advocacy.

Collaborate with the Uganda Communications Commission to create standards and guidelines for media to advance positive portrayal of youth and women in leadership.

Challenge traditional social and cultural norms and attitudes regarding gender perceptions in the media.

Provide training to women in leadership positions on strategic means for organizing an online campaign.

Show women in leadership roles and as experts on a diversity of topics daily, not as an exception.

Design agile strategies to promote the image of women in leadership through social media and other web-based platforms.

Increase female leadership in media organizations as well as in decision-making processes to promote positive portrayal of youth and women's leadership.

Increasing Women in Leadership Media Participation

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