

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**CONTACT:**

Voleine Amilcar voleine_amilcar@itvs.org 415-356-8383, ext. 244

**GEENA DAVIS LAUNCHES FIRST GLOBAL SYMPOSIUM, FOCUSES
CONVERSATION ON GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF
WOMEN AND GIRLS**

(New York, NY) — On September 23, 2011, the Independent Television Service ([ITVS](http://itvs.org)), the [Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media](http://geenadavisinstitute.org), and the Global Partnerships Forum hosted the First Global Symposium on Gender in Media at the Scandinavia House in New York. Nearly 200 distinguished guests attended the event to hear opening remarks from Academy Award® winning actor Geena Davis; Patricia Harrison, president & CEO of CPB; Amir Dossal, CEO of Global Partnerships Forum; and Madeline Di Nonno, executive director of the Institute.

"Two objectives drove us to convene this symposium. One, to officially launch a Global Gender in Media Advisory Council and the second was to identify partners to co-fund a global study that will examine gender prevalence and how our children perceive portrayals of women and girls in children's entertainment. I believe in research as a tool to change minds, facts dispel myths and misconceptions," said Geena Davis.

The event included a Global Television and a Global Filmmaker panel, both of which focused on the challenges and opportunities for dramatically changing the cultural landscape for media images of girls and women in television and film. The Global Television panel was moderated by Dr. Dafna Lemish, professor of radio and TV, Southern Illinois University, and included presenters Karen Barnes, senior vice president of programming & development, HIT; Dr. Maya Goetz, head of IZI, Bavarian Broadcasting Corporation; Myung Kang-Huneke, chief of staff & general counsel, Sesame Workshop; and Diana Manson, executive vice president of creative & content development, Chorion. The Global Filmmaker panel was moderated by Orlando Bagwell of the FORD Foundation and included presenters Maro Chermayeff, executive producer, *Half the Sky*; Ramona Diaz, filmmaker, *The Learning*; Abigail Disney, filmmaker, *Women, War & Peace*; and Dr. Stacy Smith, associate professor, USC School of Communications & Journalism.

"Women and girls are stepping forward as equals and leaders around the world, in places and ways that once seemed unattainable. It's time for media to tell those stories, and the extraordinary women and men gathered for this symposium are on the front lines of making it happen," said Patricia Harrison, president & CEO of CPB.

The role of media in impacting positive social change in gender stereotypes and female representation was one of the central issues addressed by panelists and audience members from Hollywood, commercial and public media, NGOs, and policy groups. The Institute is known for its Gender in Media Symposium. However, this Friday's event was the first Global symposium of its kind and comes on the heels of the newly minted [Women and Girls Lead campaign](http://womenandgirlslead.org) from ITVS. The multiyear initiative is designed to focus, educate, and connect audiences worldwide on issues of women's empowerment through film.

ABOUT WOMEN AND GIRLS LEAD

Women and Girls Lead is a multiyear public media initiative to focus, educate, and connect citizens worldwide in support of the issues facing women and girls. Combining independent documentary film, television, new media, and global outreach partnerships, Women and Girls Lead amplifies the voices of women and girls acting as leaders, expands understanding of gender equity, and engages an international network of citizens and organizations to act locally and reach out globally.

By building a pipeline of some 50 public television documentaries and integrating content from partners across radio, commercial television, and beyond, Women and Girls Lead offers another model for public media to serve its mission in the 21st century, connecting key stakeholders to sustain productive dialogue and participation on the most critical issues facing local communities, the nation, and the world. For more information please visit:

<http://www.itvs.org/women-and-girls-lead/films>

ABOUT THE GEENA DAVIS INSTITUTE ON GENDER IN MEDIA

Founded in 2004, the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media and its programming arm See Jane, is the only research-based organization working within the entertainment community to develop impactful solutions to dramatically improve media images for girls and reduce gender stereotyping in entertainment targeting children under 11. Davis founded the Institute in response to observing a dearth of female characters while watching children's media with her young daughter. Fueled to take action, Davis commissioned the largest research study on gender prevalence in film and television conducted by Dr. Stacy Smith, USC Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism. The research confirmed the disparity Davis observed: in family films, there was only one female character for every three male characters. In group scenes, only 17 percent of the characters are female and animated female characters wear the same percentage of sexually revealing clothing as live action female characters. The Institute's three-tiered approach of research, education and advocacy influences, trains and educates entertainment decision leaders, the public and policy makers.

For more information contact Madeline Di Nonno, Executive Director, madeline@seejane.org.

ABOUT THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS FORUM

The Global Partnerships Forum (GPF) is a unique, nonprofit platform bringing together international experts from the public and private sectors to address the Millennium Development Goals through mutually beneficial partnerships. GPF works closely with the United Nations System and other global institutions to engage stage and non-stage actors with Invest in People.

We believe that the diverse and challenging issues facing us today, from sustainable growth to the fight against HIV/AIDS, to enduring access to clean drinking water, are far too complex for any one sector to confront alone. Using the rigor and expertise of markets, the policy leadership of the public sector, and the delivery mechanisms of civil society, multi-stakeholder partnerships can provide innovative and system changing solutions. For more information go to www.globalpf.org.

###