



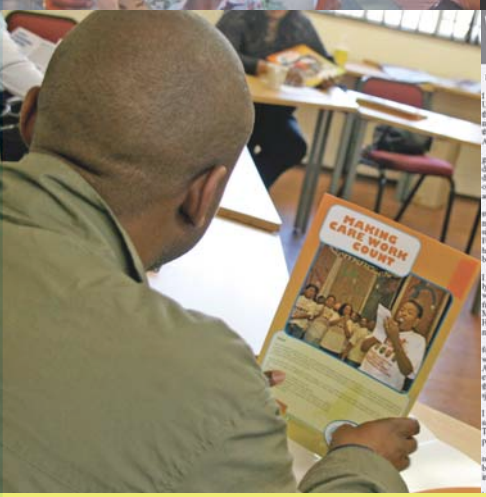






# GENDER AND MEDIA DIVERSITY JOURNAL







When finding strength is

By Pani Matsimbi, South Africa

In memory of my son Mavabo (1985-09-07 to 2006-03-12)

I liked him a lot. He had seemed like a nice man. Unlike other boys who refused to, he danced with the taller-figured girls. I was happy when he asked me to dance with him. We were both members of the youth club and danced ballroom and Latin American dance together.

The story of our meeting would have made a great tale for our children or even our grandchildren some day, if things had not gone the way they did. Our meeting and dancing partnership developed into a friendship, then a romantic relationship, and when he proposed marriage, I accepted.

That is when everything changed. From the sweet, non-discriminatory and charming young man whom I believed truly loved me, to an aggressive, arrogant and somewhat diabolical monster. From the young man who had wanted nothing but happiness for me, to this man whose purpose became to bring misery and unhappiness to my life.

Little things made him angry. Like his belief that I hated his family, because I did not visit his family as frequently as my own. Since we were not working, my mother was taking care of our son. I frequently visited them, and sent food and money. My monthly visits were a problem for my husband. He did not see how they related to our son's stay at my mother's.

It happened on a Friday. He accused me of hatred for his family, but this time he locked the door. I was preparing for bed and was wearing my nightie. As he made these accusations, he hit me with everything that was within his reach and sight — the poker from the stove, fists, kicks and even a spanbok.

He kicked me all over. Amid the kicks and fists, I screamed and pleaded for help. I was hoping that someone would hear my cries and come to my aid. The neighbours heard my screaming and tried pounding against the locked door.

My crying and the beating against the door did not stop him. I cried until I could not cry anymore, but the beating continued. I could hear people talking and exclaiming: "Oh, maybe she's dead!"

I felt like my life was going to end. There was

Pani Lydia Matsimbi




# MEDIA, ACTIVISM & CHANGE

**Gender and Media Diversity Centre (GMDC)**

The Gender and Media Diversity Journal is an output of the Gender and Media Diversity Centre (GMDC). The GMDC is a physical and virtual resource centre based in Southern Africa, with linkages in Africa and across the globe. The centre envisages media that are diverse, representative, responsive, and professional, and a citizenry, women and men, who are empowered to engage critically with their media. It facilitates the collection, connection and dissemination of information and resources relating to gender, media and diversity. The centre also collaborates on research, education and training.




The GMDC is a consortium of media NGOs and tertiary institutions. Working with an advisory group, Gender Links and the Gender and Media Southern Africa (GEMSA) Network manage the centre. The advisory group includes:

- African Fathers, Pan African (Trevor Davies)
- African Women and Child Feature Service, East Africa (Rosemary Okello)
- Highway Africa, Pan African (Chris Kabwato)
- Institute for the Advancement of Journalism (IAJ), Pan African (Shehnaaz Bulbulia)
- Inter Press Service, Pan African (Paula Fray)
- Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), SADC (Jennifer Mufune)
- Media Monitoring Project (MMP), South Africa (William Bird)
- Norwegian Council for Africa, Norway (Guro Almas)
- NSJ, SADC (Donna Mpengula Tomas),
- Polytechnic of Namibia, Namibia (Emily Brown)
- Rhodes University, South Africa (Jude Mathurine)
- SAFAIDS, SADC (Tariro Chikumbirike)
- Sangonet, South Africa (TBC)
- Sol Plaatjie Institute for Media Leadership, SADC (Francis Mdlongwa)
- Southern African Editors Forum, SADC (Rob Jamieson)
- University of Liverpool, United Kingdom (Professor Karen Ross)
- University of Stellenbosch, South Africa (Professor Lizette Rabe)
- Zambia Institute of Mass Communication, Zambia (Daniel Nkalamo)
- Independent representatives:

- India, Ammu Joseph
- Malawi, David Kamkwamba
- Malawi, Henry Malunda
- Sweden, Maria Edstrom
- Sweden, Maria Jacobson
- United Kingdom, Margaret Gallagher
- United States, Gifti Nadi
- Zambia, Hicks Sikazwe
- Zambia, Rose Nyondo

The objectives of the GMDC are:

- Promote more analytical, responsive and contextual journalism.
- Develop and share a body of knowledge on gender and media diversity.
- Publicise the work of media scholars, students and practitioners.
- Provide resources that makes the links between media theory and practice.
- Create a space for participatory discussion and debate on gender and media diversity.
- Develop global and local partnerships with strategic organisations.
- Become a centre of excellence on new approaches and fresh thinking.

To contact the GMDC:
9, Derrick Avenue, Cyrildene, 2198
Johannesburg, South Africa
http://www.gmdc.org.za
http://www.genderlinks.org.za/
Email: knowledge@genderlinks.org.za
skype: gmdcorg
Phone: +27 (0)11 622 2877
Fax: +27 (0)11 622 4732

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# EDITORIAL



## Editorial

By Deborah Walter

During the course of compiling contributions for this fourth issue of the Gender and Media Diversity Journal, many questions and contradictions arose about the role of media, as well as how activists are using media to forward their own agendas. Coincidentally, just at the time of writing this editorial, the South African television programme, *In the Public Interest*, hosted a debate on journalism and objectivity. During the 30-minute programme Amina Frense of SANEF, Aubrey Matshiqi of the Centre for policy Studies, and journalist Lesley Cowley debated the topic of objectivity in journalism. While no one denied that objectivity is something to be strived for, the panellists conceded that everyone comes from a certain historical, ideological background, and that bias comes in many forms – including lack of gender and racial balance in media representation. Thus, "objectivity and bias is something constantly debated as a way of striving towards it."

This edition of the Gender and Media Diversity Journal, focusing on media, activism and change, aims to do just that, to create dialogue and debate about the interaction between media, activism, and change. It comes when South Africa is coping with a looming energy crisis, food prices are rising, local media celebrity Redi Direko has been active as part of a campaign to end gender violence in taxi ranks. It is perhaps most fitting then that media be examining their role as activists, and that activists be examining how they are improving their own use of media. Though this edition of the journal focuses on media, activism, and change around the issues of gender, HIV/AIDS, governance and child and youth media, media also engage with such diverse issues as environmental reporting, post-conflict reconciliation, and a wide range of health issues, such as malaria, tuberculosis, and measles.

Zarina Geloo, owner and editor of Zambian *Weekly Guardian*, personifies the struggle between media and activism. Her own self-conflict concerning her role as a human rights activist and a journalist does not prevent her from active engagement in these issues, yet she fully recognises that this role, and how others perceive it, is a difficult balance when it comes to bias. For others, the role of media is more straightforward. Kitty Warnock suggests that communication and media are at the heart of sustainable development, and calls for more support and understanding to further strengthen media as part of the development process.

Perhaps no other community of activists has been as engaged with the media as the gender activists. Colleen Lowe Morna shares the South Africa- based Gender Links experience of promoting gender "in and through the media." This experience is further detailed by Loveness Jambaya who shares how media strategies have been consistently refined in the annual 16 Days of Activism campaign and Marriete Van Dijk explains how 'I" Stories bring out the personal perspectives of survivors of gender violence.

There are many different kinds of biases, and those involved with media for development may argue that their role is to in fact fill in the gaps, adding the missing voices that media do not cover. Saeanna Chingamuka of Zimbabwe shows that marginalised communities, such as rural women, can be empowered when their voices are heard.

Media and HIV/AIDS activists have also seen

increasing interaction, and many media have shown commitment to bringing the issue out into the open. Susan Smuts of *The Sunday Times* in South Africa, shares her experience of managing a campaign in which people affected by HIV and AIDS have the opportunity to tell their diverse stories in a weekly column. Smuts concludes, "I don't know whether this is activism or good journalism. Maybe it's a bit of both."

Again the question of media responsibility arises when Mia Malan discusses what good HIV terminology is, against readers/ listeners/ and journalists ideas about what language can be easily understood. Providing an example from the United Kingdom, Lucy Stackpool-Moore discusses how African communities in the UK can confront stigma through media. A collection of case studies provides example of the diversity of initiatives that aim to use media to promote awareness and reduce stigma related to HIV/AIDS.

When it comes to media, children and youth are often forgotten, yet when given a chance are leading advocates on children's rights and health. Mimi Brazeau explains how Plan has piloted radio by and for young people in West Africa, accomplishing what adult producers never imagined possible. Sikhonzile Ndlovu explains how the first step to media engagement is media literacy, and Daniel Walter explores how participatory media with young people in countries like Mozambique are creating new opportunities for young voices.

Many countries in the region, such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Angola are heading into elections at the time of this writing. In his article, Simiyu Barasa highlights some issues with media coverage in Kenya during the violence that followed the December 2007 elections. On a more positive note, Sibongile Mpofu discussed how media have engaged with the Women in Politics Support Unit (WiPSU) in Zimbabwe.

Looking ahead to the future, of media and new technologies, Glory Mushinge questions whether new and emerging social media will change or replace traditional media. The case of YAHAnet by Claudia Mitchell, Bronwen Low and Michael Hoechsmann, McGill University, shows how new technologies can be useful to increasing access to information, while Firoze Manji points out that technologies are just tools, that people remain at the centre of any development initiative.

We hope that this edition of the journal will inspire discussion on media and activism, and create more dialogue on both media's role in social change, as well as how activists can make better strategic use of media. This edition contains many perspectives and examples of initiatives, yet many more exist and are continuously emerging.

The recent launch of the Gender and Media Diversity Centre further provides opportunities for media and activists (and those who may consider themselves both) to engage in debate and dialogue, share ideas, and create partnerships. We hope that the dialogue that begins here will continue in that space, and encourage all those involved in media diversity to engage with each other through this and other forums.

We invite comment and feedback on this issue, as well as contributors for future issues. For information about upcoming themes and contributors guidelines, please contact the editor on: editor@genderlinks.org.za.

Happy reading

# NEWS BRIEFS

***Women Make the News*:**

This year, UNESCO held its 8th annual *Women Make the News* global action event under the theme "Women's Untold Stories." The event encourages media organisations producing daily news to give editorial responsibility to women journalists and editors on 8th March, International Women's Day, as a way to promote gender equality in the media. Organisers say that women in journalism continue to face harsh realities in terms of job security and safety, workplace discrimination, access to facilities, and lingering stereotypes. Women journalists encounter significant obstacles to full participation, especially when it comes to opportunities for management positions. UNESCO's *Women Make the News* campaign has two goals: to promote gender equality in the newsroom, and to highlight the need to promote women journalists throughout the world to decision-making positions.

In addition to encouraging newsrooms to give editorial responsibility to women journalists and editors, UNESCO also invites print and broadcast media to share stories, articles, features and programmes that support the 2008 theme, "Women's Untold Stories." Participants are asked to sign up on the UNESCO website and submit stories that champion women's achievements and contributions to their communities from their own perspectives. The stories collected from participants will be published as a 'best practices' collection, which campaign organisers hope will inspire others and raise the visibility of the multiple roles women play in the news arena: as newsmakers, correspondents and key sources of information.

*Source: http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php URL_ID=18295&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION= 201.html*

**Zambian media push for reform**

13 Zambian media bodies have banded together to spearhead a campaign for media law reforms in the country. One of their main campaign points is the proposed amendments to the Freedom of Information (FOI) bill. The bodies urge government to publicise the proposed amendments, and encourage Members of Parliament to reject the bill if it is not publicised by the time it is tabled in government.

The media bodies also demanded that public and private officials put an immediate stop to alleged harassment of journalists and threats to media houses. They are appealing to parliamentarians to support an open FOI Act, and to deal with other pieces of legislation that impact on media freedom, whether that means repealing them, amending them, or enacting new legislation.

The FOI Act was withdrawn from parliament in 2002 for further consultation, and was only reintroduced this year when President Levy Mwanawasa officially opened parliament. The organisations involved in the campaign include PAZA, Press Freedom Committee of the Post, the Zambia chapter of both the Commonwealth Press Union and the Southern Africa Editors Forum, the Media Trust Fund and Media Council of Zambia.

Others are the local chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa, the Zambia Media Women's Association, Zambia Union of Journalists, PANOS Institute of Southern Africa, Zambia Community Media Forum, Society for Senior Journalists and Catholic Media Association. MISA-Zambia chairperson Henry Kabwe urged the media to sensitise the public about the FOI Act and what exactly it is about, as many people have been suspicious of the Act, saying it would only benefit the media, and not private citizens.

*Source: http://www.journalism.co.za/news/ new-push-for-reform-in-ambia.html*

**SAfAIDS launches DVD and guidebook**

The Southern African HIV/AIDS Information Dissemination Service (SAfAIDS) launched their new DVD, *Spreading*

*the Word*, together with Red Herring Productions in Harare, Zimbabwe, to commemorate the 10th anniversary of V-Day

V-Day was started on 14 February 1998 by playwright Eve Ensler, author of *The Vagina Monologues*, a play that deals with women's sexuality and gender-based violence. The play has proved life-changing for her and many other women across the world. The DVD follows three women who try to bring the concept behind Ensler's award-winning play to Africa. The DVD features actors, artists and musicians from Mozambique and Botswana as they tackle issues they were brought up to believe were taboo.

The women develop plays that illustrate how their lives have been affected by gender-based violence and the experiences they've had in their sexual relationships. Through introspection and self-reflection, the women begin to reclaim their inner strength and the right to have their voices heard. They show that the problem is regional, that although the women are from different countries the issues they face when it comes to gender-based violence are essentially the same.

SAfAIDS Executive Director Lois Chingandu said at the launch that gender-based violence and HIV are dual epidemics in the region and she called on civil society to work to find ways to effect lasting change. She stressed the importance of popular media initiatives like theatre and video as crucial to getting the messages across.

The DVD and guidebook are designed for use by individuals, rights groups and community organisations in their work against gender-based violence and HIV.

*Source: SAfAIDS listserv, partnerszimbabwe@eforums.healthdev.org*

**New radio drama probes gender dynamics**

Kenyan airwaves will soon play host to an exciting new radio drama that not only provides great entertainment, but also raises awareness and highlights key issues around the rights of women. The drama, being produced by CMFD (Community Media for Development) Productions, is part of a 3-year multimedia campaign by FEMNET and FAHAMU to popularise the African Union Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

The Protocol is a key document in the fight for gender equality, and for those countries who have signed, it becomes legally binding. It deals with issues such as marriage and divorce, property and inheritance, gender-based violence, political participation, and reproductive health and HIV. While the majority of African countries have signed the Protocol, and have therefore technically committed to carrying out its provisions at a governmental level, most people on the ground know very little about it. Popularising the Protocol is a crucial step in ensuring that people, especially women, know what rights they have and what legal frameworks are available to them, giving them the ability to hold governments accountable to their commitments.



Josephine Oduor and Maureen Akinyi Obara as Mama Bahati and her daughter Raha in Crossroads *Credit: Roselynn Musa*

The new radio drama, titled *Crossroads*, aims to do just that. Through a unique and suspenseful storyline that spans 6 episodes, the drama encourages listeners to look at gender issues from a different perspective, literally. The drama's main storyline sees two people at opposite ends of the spectrum – a market woman with an abusive husband and a corrupt and sexist police chief – switch bodies. The story follows the two characters as they experience life in the other's body, raising questions

about a woman's place in society through the situations they face.

Simiyu Barasa, one of the team of scriptwriters who worked on the project, says, "People listening to the drama will learn that women's rights are not just a 'foreign' concept being blabbered about by women uprooted from their culture, but a human concern that would make society progress better if addressed." The drama will air on Kenyan radio stations later this year.

*Source: www.cmfd.org*

**Newly Released digital stories**

Sonke Gender Justice has recently released new digital stories that focus on gender, AIDS and migration in the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The stories are part of a digital story project launched in 2007, in collaboration with the Centre for Digital Storytelling, to chronicle the lives of men and women affected by violence, gender issues and HIV/AIDS. Sonke Gender Justice started the project in an attempt to counter the abundance of negatively-stereotyped images of men. By creating short digital stories about their lives and experiences, particularly with regards to violence, the organisation hopes to provide an opportunity for men and women to share more honest and accurate accounts of their lives, and build a more balanced representation of men.

The stories have been used across the country by Men as Partners (MAP) activists in a diverse range of spaces from prisons to churches to inspire men to take an active role in promoting gender justice and ending gender inequalities that slow the response to HIV/AIDS. The Sonke Gender Justice project, started in February 2006, tries to address the social aspects of the HIV epidemic, with a particular focus on gender issues. To achieve this, the Sonke Gender Justice project works to build government, civil society and citizen capacity to achieve gender equality, prevent gender-based violence and reduce the spread of HIV and the impact of AIDS.

For the digital stories project, the organisation also developed a facilitator's guide to assist individuals and community groups who want to use the stories to promote community action. The stories are available for download on the Sonke Gender Justice website; the facilitator's guide and DVD of the complete stories are also available for groups involved in gender and HIV/AIDS activism.

*Source: www.genderjustice.org.za*

**Petition to end gender violence in Kenya**

A Rwandan men's organisation has initiated a global petition to put a stop to gender-based violence in Kenya. Rwanda Men's Resource Centre (RWAMREC) founder, Fidel Rutayisire, is currently organising a pledge drive for men across the globe to speak out against the violence against women in girls that has characterised the post-election conflict in Kenya. Reports show that after the violence erupted in December 2007, the number of rape cases presenting a local hospitals and clinics increased alarmingly. Women and girls often bear the brunt of the violence in conflict situations, with rape, assault, femicide and infanticide increasing as conflicts escalate.

Signatures from the RWAMREC petition will be sent to Kenyan Ministers, Parliamentarians, other authorities, and civil society organisations. Their goal is to collect 500 signatures by 1 April. Men's Resources International, an organisation dedicated to promoting healthy, compassionate and responsible models of masculinity, and encouraging men to work with and support women around the world, is hosting the petition. To sign the petition, visit www.mensresourcesinternational.org.

*Source: www.mensresourcesinternational.org*

**Film bill sparks censorship debate**

The Film and Publications Amendment Bill has come under fire from media groups recently, who say certain sections of the bill may be unconstitutional. The Amendment bill aims to regulate, among others, the publication, broadcasting and handling of materials that contain traces of child pornography. Media groups say the bill essentially allows for pre-publication censorship, which they argue is unconstitutional.

Previously, the bill required newspapers to present any material containing sexual content and propaganda for war or incitement of violence for examination by the Films and Publications Board prior to publication. Since the media groups' submission to parliament, that section of the bill has been changed to exclude all newspapers belonging to the South African Newspaper Association (SANA).

However, it is not just media houses who are concerned about the implications of pre-publication censorship. The National Council of Provinces' select committee on social services has also commissioned legal opinion on other aspects of the bill they believe could impose a restraint on freedom of expression. Senior state law advisor Mongameli Kweta insists that in this case, freedom of expression was limited to protect children from exposure to child pornography and other forms of sexual exploitation – that freedom of expression is not being abolished, simply regulated in the best interests of children.

*Source: http://www.journalism.co.za/news/state-lawyer-backs-film-bill.html*

**Media growth looking up**

The latest South African All Media and Products Survey (Amps), which looks at the state of the media on an annual basis, shows there was good growth last year across all media, especially for TV audiences and the internet. DStv, the region's pay-TV operator, increased its viewership by 3%, showing an increase in population penetration from 7.7% in 2006 to 10.7% last year.

Despite warnings of an expected slowdown, especially for print-based media houses, both magazines and newspapers showed rises in readership of at least 2%. According to Adriaan de Buck, director of MediaCompete, *Business Day* still retains the wealthiest readership, with an average household monthly income of R20 700.

Overall internet usage has shown an increase from 6% in 2006 to 6.9% last year.

*Source: http://allafrica.com/stories/200803180378.html*

**Exciting new gender and media centre launched!**




The Gender and Media Diversity Centre was launched at the Gender Links offices in Johannesburg on the 13 March 2008. Attendees from across Southern Africa were present and joined in the celebrations. Clr Nandi Mayathula Koza (Member of the Mayoral Committee for Community Development, Johannesburg Metro) welcomed all guests to the City of Joburg on behalf of Joburg City Mayor Amos Masondo. Mayathula Khoza spoke of the importance of having a regional knowledge centre on gender, media and diversity to assist in the quest for gender equality. Joe Thloloe (South African Press Ombudsman) and Portia Kobue (Executive Producer, Morning Live, SABC) encouraged citizens to take the media to task for gender insensitive coverage. Kobue appealed to journalists to mainstream gender in all their stories.

Gender Links and the Open Society Foundation South Africa (OSF-SA) launched two publications during the launch. The OSF-SA launched *Meeting their mandates: A critical analysis of South African Media Statutory Bodies*. The primary purpose of the research was to assess if four South African public institutions are meeting their 'public mandates'. Gender Links launched the *Gender and Tabloids in Southern Africa*. The study focused on gender in tabloids in Mauritius, South Africa and Tanzania.

Guests ended the evening with a braai and dance to celebrate the launch of the GMDC. Much fun was had by all.

*The GMDC is a physical and virtual resource centre based in Southern Africa, with linkages in Africa and across*

*the globe. The centre envisages media that are diverse, representative, responsive, and professional, and a citizenry, women and men, who are empowered to engage critically with their media. It facilitates the collection, connection and dissemination of information and resources relating to gender, media and diversity. The centre also collaborates on research, education and training. For more information on the GMDC contact knowledge@genderlinks.org.za.*

**Upcoming Events**
**Narrative Journalism Conference**

Acclaimed South African writer Zakes Mda and Pulitzer Prize winning journalists are set to share their skills and inspire local journalists at the 2008 Narrative Journalism Conference in May. Organiser frayintermedia (formerly Paula Frey and Associates) says the conference is a unique opportunity for editors and both established and up-and-coming journalists to take part in debates and workshops, while learning new skills in narrative journalism from international experts. According to freyintermedia, this year's conference is aimed at sharpening journalists' and editors' storytelling techniques. In addition to the two day conference, a one day workshop run by Jacqui Banaszynski and Tom French and aimed at senior journalists will also be offered. Only those who have been at the conference may attend. The conference and workshop will be held 21-23 May at Hackle Brooke Estate in Johannesburg. For more information contact Ruth Molopyane or Debby Kramer at: 011 341 0767 or at rmolopyane@frayintermedia.com.

*Source:http://www.journalism.co.za/opportunities/narrative-journalism-conference.html*

**The Power of Movements:**
**AWID International Forum**

The Association for Women's Rights in Development will be holding its 11th annual International Forum on Women's Rights and Development this November in Cape Town, South Africa. This year's Forum focuses on the theme, "The Power of Movements," and like previous Forums, aims to be both a conference and a call to action. Open to anyone who works or has an interest in women's rights, international development and social justice, and particularly those from the global South and traditionally marginalised groups, the Forum is a place for women's rights leaders and activists from around the world to meet, network and learn from each other. Delegates engage in four days of plenary talks, interactive sessions, workshops, debates and creative sessions that aim to spark powerful thinking on gender equality and women's rights. The Forum also includes informal caucuses, events, cultural activities and social and political events that assist global and regional networking and partnership-building. This year's conference will be held from 14-17 November 2008. For more information about the forum and how to register, visit www.avid.org/forum08.

*Source: http://www.womensnet.org.za/calendar.shtml?AA_SL_Session=74b3540fcd21d2d2b00948dec25723b3&x=11816*

**Global conference on peace and communication**

The World Association of Christian Communication (WACC) will hold its fourth global Congress on communication in Cape Town, South Africa, from October 6 to 10, focusing on the theme "Communication is Peace: Building viable communities." The deadline to apply is June 30. The full registration fee is 600 CAD (Approximately US $586). However, those living and working in the 'Global South' are given an automatic subsidy of 200 CAD (Approximately US $195), reducing their registration fee to 400 CAD (Approximately US $391).

*Source: http://www.ijnet.org/Director.aspx?P=Article&ID=307440&LID=1*

# A place for Media Activism



Diana Regisford, Kaya FM and Colleen Lowe Morna, Gender Links Executive Director at the launch of the 365 Days Programme, Union Building, Pretoria, South Africa, March 2007

*Credit: Trevor Davies*



## An activist and a journalist?

By Zarina Geloo

I asked a group of journalists who were meeting at a regional conference in South Africa once, how journalists should draw the line between activism and a profession that calls for a certain amount of detachment.

None could give me a straight answer, save to regurgitate the "a journalist should never get involved in the story or else they lose their objectivity."

I had just narrated to this group of journalists of how my newspaper managed to get a sitting Commander of the National Air Force fired by the president for abuse of office. He was allegedly coercing his secretaries to have sex with him and rewarding them with favours paid for from allocations meant for the defence of the nation.

The story ran for about four weeks until the Commander was fired. It was a great story and the newspaper received great credit, which was great, but it was what happened in between that gave me the feeling that I had perhaps blurred the line between just doing my job and joining a crusade. I was uncomfortable in this role as an activist.

When it looked like the story was flagging, I engaged with the women's movement who were initially very reluctant, this was after all a powerful man. I put it across to them that this was an advocacy point for them (sexual abuse) and they rose to the occasion to give them their due, and began to look for ways in which to help the victim and I reported all that.

Then I began to become actively engaged in finding solicitors for the victim. I spent days with the victim going from one police officer to another, to get her statement and open a docket. This was not journalism and I knew it, but I could not stop myself. The story was so horrifying; I felt the victim's anger.

When the Non-governmental Organisation Coordinating Committee (NGOCC) held a press conference condemning acts of abuse and urging government to deal with the matter of the General and his victim, I was involved in organising the press conference; I edited and even signed off on the press release and called up other media houses to attend the press brief. Should I have been that involved? My friends in the media did not think so. They asked why I was organising them to attend the meeting; they suspected that I was up to something because this is just "not the done thing."

Soon after that, the newspaper got the reputation for fighting 'the woman's battles;' I had loads of stories coming in from the NGOs and public as well. One story was of a young Somali girl who was born and raised in Zambia and whose parents wanted to spirit her away to marry some stranger in Somalia. She was already at university doing her first year.

It was a regular story but again I found myself on the

other side. I sided with the girl against her parents; I collaborated in keeping her hidden her until she got a restraining order; I constantly called her to give her encouragement. I encouraged other media houses to write stories on early marriages and its evils. Again, I crossed the line. I was not spared the wrath of the girls' parents who asked whether I was a police officer, a judge or a journalist. Many media people asked the same question, somewhere more forthright, and asked me why I had bothered to set up a newspaper when I really should have formed an NGO.

They have every right to ask, journalists do not go around as collaborators. They do not help in creating the story. They have to keep "their objectivity."

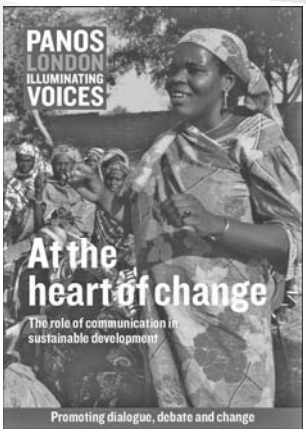
It is an uncomfortable place I find myself in, because on the one hand I agree that journalists must maintain a professional distance from their stories. I still remember the mantra of not getting emotionally involved, remaining detached and just telling the story like it is.

On the other hand, how can someone be objective in the face of human rights abuses, especially against vulnerable people like children? How can someone's misery not touch you and move you into action?

Besides, how many times are journalists being told to get "involved," to be more aggressive, to be militant on social issues; isn't this why every sector wants to "build the capacity" of journalists so that they can understand issues and report more effectively? This is the foundation for activism.

This is what I say to convince myself when I attend demonstrations, that I am doing the right thing. I have not found that balance between activism and being a regular hack. I think many people choose (or inevitably) to become one or the other. I do not want to make that choice; I would like to be both. I am not sure it's possible, but I can try, can't I?

*Zarina Geloo is the owner and editor of the Guardian Weekly in Zambia.*




## At the Heart of Change: The Role of Communication in Sustainable Development

By Kitty Warnock

Panos London's *At the Heart of Change: The Role of Communication in Sustainable Development* 2007) is a call to development thinkers and planners to put communication at the centre of all development thinking - with more resources, planning, and expertise. Panos London believes that flows of communication, or lack of them, can make the difference between success and failure in achieving development goals. Readers of The Drum Beat probably agree - but top-level political and development leaders continue to neglect communication. In this piece, I ask you: What can we as the communication for development community do to put communication where it belongs, at the centre of development thinking? What are the obstacles, and what are the opportunities, as you see them in your own work?

**What is the Challenge?**

Communication is central to all aspects of development, and development initiatives do not succeed unless they include and are supported by communication - yet communication is often neglected or undervalued in development policy, planning, and budgets. It is introduced into programmes too little, too late, and in a fragmentary way. Panos London argues that communication needs to be included from the very start in all analysis of development problems, in the establishment of development goals and policy, in planning, and at all levels of programme implementation. Senior decision-makers in governments and development agencies should take the lead in understanding the essential role of communication and integrating it into all development initiatives.

But at present, how many international and national development pledges and plans mention communication? National Poverty Reduction Strategies, for example, rarely highlight it. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) only touch on it in passing. Top-level donor agreements such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness do not mention it, although without communication none of the declaration's aims could be achieved. In general, development plans and goals do not specify the role of communication.

Why is this? Perhaps the importance of communication is taken for granted - but that is not the way for communication to get the attention and resources it needs. Development leaders must realise that effective communication does not happen naturally. It needs to be planned and supported.

Many initiatives recently have tried to put communication in its proper place on the development map - the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the Africa Commission, the African Media Development Initiative (AMDI) and Stream, the World Congress on Communication for Development (WCCD), and efforts within individual agencies - emphasising different elements from the menu of 'Communication for Development'. But we are still waiting for a clear commitment to communication from top-level development actors, global and national. Panos London has drawn together the arguments made in these previous initiatives into a single framing vision of how all types of communication are essential for addressing all of today's development concerns - and to identify clearly what different

development actors can do to strengthen communication. This is the purpose of Panos London's two publications: *At the heart of change*, and its companion *The case for communication*, which lays out the arguments more fully.

**The Argument (I): Why Communication is at the Centre of Development**

Communication is a defining human characteristic and a central element in the functioning of all societies; it is a goal in itself, as well as an enabler of development. Panos London's definition of 'communication for development' includes all channels - broadcast and print, telephones and digital, face-to-face - and all types of communication from planned information campaigns to informal interpersonal dialogue, from knowledge management to entertainment. Effective communication processes are two-way - they involve both listening and speaking.

Many current analyses and strategic approaches to development require communication as an integral element. Good governance, direct budget support, aid coherence, human rights, gender equity, equitable economic growth, livelihoods, the MDGs - all of these approaches involve building people's capacities to participate in development, make their voices heard and hold governments accountable. In other words, they depend on communication - though this is rarely spelled out.

For example, good governance - itself a goal as well as an enabler of other aspects of development - depends on many different types of communication. It enables peace, democracy, social and political inclusion, participation, accountability, effective and efficient delivery of services, and economic activities. Some of the many areas of communication needed to sustain good governance are:

- Independent and quality media to foster political processes, host public debate and hold governments and other institutions accountable;
- Laws, systems and capacity for transparency, monitoring and accountability of government by parliament and citizens;
- Dialogue and information sharing within government, to ensure coherence between departments;
- Communication systems to facilitate administrative relations between government and citizens, and citizens' access to these;
- Information management for effective and responsive delivery of public services; and
- Dialogue and networking among civil society, to enable solution of problems, formulation of needs, and participation in political and development processes.

For another illustration of how all types of communication should be considered together in planning for development, take one of the MDGs, improving maternal health. Addressing this challenge needs actions at many levels, all of which entail particular types of communication. The following is just a sample:

- Changing social/cultural attitudes to women and to reproductive health - with mass media including entertainment as partners
- Changing the status and power of women within families - through community discussions, mass media, and education
- National policy and strategy choices - involving debate of different options between government, parliament, experts, civil society organisations (CSOs) and the public, through media and other channels as well as political processes
- Provision of services - using information and communication technology (ICT) for managing resources and linking the field-level to the centre, developing transparency processes for reducing corruption, and drawing on many different media for training of personnel
- Ensuring take-up of services - getting information to potential users through mass media and other channels.

Neglecting any one of these areas of communication could jeopardise the success of government or non-governmental organisation (NGO) initiatives to reduce maternal mortality.

**The Argument (II) - Why Communication Needs Support from Development Organisations**

*At the heart of change* highlights why communication cannot be left to look after itself but, rather, needs support from development organisations. One broad area to consider is that governments and traditional media need support as they struggle to keep up with the rapidly evolving challenges of new communication technologies. For governments, these ICTs are revolutionising their relations with their citizens; for media, the challenge is to redefine the role of professional journalism within the plethora of unmediated individual voices in the blogosphere.



Media has a role to play in development, interview of market manager during Business Unusual, Tanzania. *Credit: Trevor Davies*

Another broad area for development intervention is the need to ensure that the poor are included in flows of communication and enabled to participate in development processes. The huge surge in the amount and accessibility of communication and media in recent years has been mostly market-driven, and the market is not the best means of meeting the needs of poor and marginalised people. Panos London argues that communication and media should be seen as public goods: everybody gains from their healthy presence, but the investments needed to provide them universally may not be profitable enough to attract private investors.

Development support may be direct financial support, or policy direction and regulation - for instance, a frequency allocation policy that ensures bandwidth is available for community radio stations - or indirect support such as providing electricity to rural areas.

Technology is certainly spreading rapidly - the boom in mobile phones in Africa and India is evidence that technologies can spread through unaided market mechanisms - but the market alone may not reach the poorest, and may contribute to widening gaps between poor and rich. For development goals, governments may need to intervene in markets - for instance to ensure telephony reaches remote areas, or to ensure the smallest businesses can benefit from the internet. International ICT infrastructure may need support, as the costs and difficulties of bringing together large numbers of stakeholders to negotiate complex agreements are beyond the scope of individual investors.

Mass media have also blossomed since democratisation in the 1990s, but they face huge challenges, in rich as well as poor countries. Independent, critical, credible, pluralistic media are essential for good governance, accountability and public debate. But this kind of high quality public service journalism is expensive, and threatened by the pressures of survival in a competitive market. Regarding media as a public good opens the way for governments and development agencies to provide support. Non-profitable media such as community radio stations may also need support, and small media outlets may need protection against the consolidating tendencies of the market.

**What Panos London is Calling For**

Our agenda for action calls for governments, national and international civil society organisations, development organisations and donors to work together to:

- Build more open, transparent information and communication systems and political cultures;
- Treat information, communication and the media as "public goods" and invest accordingly;
- Take a holistic view of communication processes and integrate communications into development planning and implementation; and
- Invest in media development.

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# Diverse Voices: Media Access and Participation of Marginalised Communities

By Deborah Walter

**Abstract**

Strategies to increase access and participation of marginalised communities in media are part of poverty reduction and addressing human rights and health issues. This may include training media to be more aware of diverse voices, as well as working with communities to create participatory media products. Such strategies can result in new and interesting perspectives on news and current events, as well as opportunities for diverse voices to speak out on issues that affect them.

**Key words**

media, participation, gender, HIV/AIDS, migration

## Social Exclusion and participation

Research suggests that social exclusion and the resulting lack of opportunities are major causes of perpetuating poverty and violations of human rights. As the 2005 Commission for Africa Report indicates, "Even within poor countries, the poorest people are those who are excluded from information, from government services, from full participation in society, politics and the economy and even informal community support systems. All too often, the reason for the exclusion is discrimination, for example against women, disabled persons, ethnic or linguistic minorities, or persons with HIV or AIDS. Exclusion makes it especially difficult to escape from poverty..." (Commission for Africa 2005). Social exclusion, whether based on race, religion, ethnicity, disability, gender, caste, age or sexuality, is important because it denies certain groups of people opportunities to participate equally in society, and this is a major cause of poverty and insecurity. (DFID 2005)

Media is an important part of this social fabric. Media not only reflects and reports on society, but also shapes public opinions and perceptions. Media that perpetuates stereotypes about certain communities can exacerbate discrimination and social exclusion. When it comes to media, social exclusion means a lack of opportunities to have one's voice heard and be able to play a role in advocating on issues that affect them. For the most part socially excluded communities and individuals are also the same who are most vulnerable – migrants, children and youth, women (especially economically poor and rural women), people living with HIV, among many others.

Exclusion from the media takes on many forms. It is both

about how mainstream media does not access diverse voices when it comes to covering news and current events, which results in some issues not been covered at all, or being covered poorly. It is also about the lack of skills and capacity of individuals, non-journalists from these communities, to engage with media both in creating their own media products and in responding to media.

**Lack of diverse voices**

Across a broad spectrum of communities and issues, it is apparent that there is a small minority that are seen and heard in print, radio, and television, and who are involved in the creation of media.

Research indicates media under-presents women's voices in Africa. Across the 12 countries of the Southern African region, women constitute just 17% of news sources. Women constitute just 19% of news sources in South Africa and black women, who constitute 41% of the population, account for a mere 7% of news sources. (Gender Links and Media Institute of Southern Africa 2003).

Likewise, persons with disabilities do not regularly feature in the media, and media rarely portrays them as persons with opinions on news and topical issues. When they are interviewed, it is mostly on disability issues. Alternatively, they will be talked about with pity, or with astonishment because they have managed to do something brave "in spite" of their disabilities. The disability is usually the focus of the report when an individual that has a disability appears in the public media. (The Secretariat of the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities 2008, 2)

While media may lack certain voices, it can also actually be perpetuate discrimination and stereotypes by the voices that it sometimes allows. The South African print and broadcast media reflect many stereotypes of foreign migrants. Research suggests that the media contributes to xenophobia when it supports negative public perceptions of migrants, particularly African migrants, as illegal, criminal and threats to social and economic prosperity, or carriers of diseases such as HIV/AIDS. The Media Monitoring Project (2003) comments on these stereotypical representations in its research report on Xenophobia in the media :

> …there is no doubt that public attitudes have been formed by highly emotional media images that portray South Africa as "flooded" or "overrun" by undocumented migrants from the rest of Africa.

**Challenges for media**

Reporting on such a diversity of complex issues poses many challenges for newsrooms. Looking at a the broad scope of reporting on human rights, health and poverty-related issues, the structural problems of media finance affect working journalists, who are often under-skilled, under-trained, poorly paid and precariously employed. Time and resources may not be available to fund the research needed for stories on poverty reduction, especially ones informed by poor people's views. In turn, journalists may lack the knowledge and practical skills to gather and decipher the growing range of information and analysis (Wood & Barnes 2007).

For example, in the case of South Africa, one issue is that the juniorisation of newsrooms and a lack of skilled staff and adequate resources have resulted in an increase in the number of incidents of poor reporting related to migration. Coverage of key social issues such as the representation of race, racial stereotyping, xenophobia and racism, is often of limited value, as it often fails to explore pertinent aspects in any depth (Mtwana and Bird 2006).

Largely journalists continue to rely on "official" sources, often not accessing the very people that an issue most affects. As studies of media environments and HIV/AIDS reporting in Southern Africa have shown, the key to effective reporting on the epidemic is a vibrant, free and diverse media environment. Yet, at present, HIV/AIDS is still predominantly reported in a retro/reactive way, as a one-dimensional health issue and on the basis of solely government sources of information, rather than, for example, the "real life'" voices of those who are most vulnerable to and/or affected by the epidemic (Panos 2005).

In research conducted by Panos London on media and HIV in Southern Africa, the government, particularly the Ministry of Health, was the dominant source of information about HIV/AIDS used by and reported in the media. In countries such as Swaziland and Zimbabwe, this was linked to a restrictive media environment and limited capacity of the sector to criticise official policies and practices. In all of the countries, it was also linked to a lack of analytical training and investigative skills among journalists. In reality, stories with a government or medical source were more likely to be used than ones that came from, for example, a community member. For journalists with little time and/or limited training, getting an article from an official source was seen as much "safer" than validating and following up on an unofficial perspective (Panos 2005).

Another reason for reports that may perpetuate discrimination is the increasingly sensationalised reporting on sensitive issues associated with the growing tabloidisation of the media in Southern Africa. Out of 182 newspapers in 10 countries, 27 (or 15%) are regarded by media analysts in those countries as tabloid both in form and content. These are characterised by sensation with stories told in a melodramatic and breathless tone. These papers are growing in popularity, even despite the fact that audiences are aware that tabloids do not always tell the truth. When asked to select from a long list of what they dislike about tabloids, 52% women and 50% men said they do not always tell the truth (Lowe Morna and Ndlovu 2008).

This tabloidisation is also spilling over into mainstream media. All newspapers tend to lead with dramatic headlines that may sell more publications, but often trivialise the issues at stake and promote stereotypes and discrimination, which reinforces the alienation of specific groups of people (Mtwana and Bird 2006).

**The case for practical media training**

Journalists who report on social and human rights issues often grapple with the tension between commitment to impartiality, bias, and activist reporting. However, given the lack of capacity and knowledge in newsrooms on such a diverse range of issues, it makes sense that those who are competent and well-placed to conduct training on issues such as gender, human rights, the environment, etc., should do so. In doing so, this is not a call for journalists to become "activists" but rather opening new perceptions and creating better balanced coverage.

Issue-based training that includes a practical component offers journalists an opportunity to expand their skills in short-term sessions that impart knowledge, encourage new perspectives, and also put journalists in touch with those that they may not normally interview. Along with building skills and sensitising media about these issues, this strategy actually encourages journalists to interact with these communities, hopefully breaking down barriers that will increase the likelihood that they will seek out more diverse sources when reporting.

*Business Unusual*

This training, based on training material developed by Gender Links in collaboration with the Konrad Adendaur Foundation and the Netherlands Institute of Southern Africa (NIZA) covers a broad spectrum of gender and economic concerns, including gender and the macroeconomic environment, development, planning budgets, work, trade, enterprise and globalisation. Exposing business and economic reporters to key decision makers and entrepreneurs, the course includes the production of a supplement that generally is included in a local newspaper, and opportunity for participants to write for the Gender Links Opinion and Commentary Service, as well as enter stories for the Gender and Media awards. Run by GL in collaboration with media training institutions in Southern African countries, the *Business Unusual* course offers journalists an opportunity to view business and the economy through a gender lens, often resulting in new and unheard stories. Some of these stories are also offered through the GL Commentary Service, and

A PLACE FOR MEDIA ACTIVISM

the fact that they get picked up by editors throughout the region for re-publications is a testament to how these new perspectives are well received by editors and readers. The article below is just one example.

# Call for paternity leave for fathers

## ... as fight for gender equality ignores rights of men

By Lorato Bailang, Botlhe Moseki, Thato Enosa and Bathami Chilume

Many people often complain about men who do not take responsibility for their children.

Yet the fight for gender equality and parental rights has largely ignored the other side of the equation, men who are denied the right to equal time and access to their children. Responsibilities and rights go hand in hand.

The Employment Act in Botswana makes provision for maternity leave, but is silent on the issue of paternity leave. Of late men in the country are demanding change. Parental leave is the right to take time off work to care for one's child or make welfare arrangements for the child.

Ideally, this includes maternity leave for mothers and paternity leave for fathers. There are two parents for every child, and in a changing world where both partners are likely to have a job, paternal leave ought to be considered.

President for Tertiary and Allied Workers Union (TAWU) Allan Keitseng says they have had discussions aimed at drafting new public service laws which will have a provision for paternity leave. He said the government is hesitant in such issues despite being the biggest employer in the country. Workers at shop level (not in top positions) are not aware that they can demand paternity leave as the leadership is not sensitising them about it since they believe it's an unnecessary luxury.

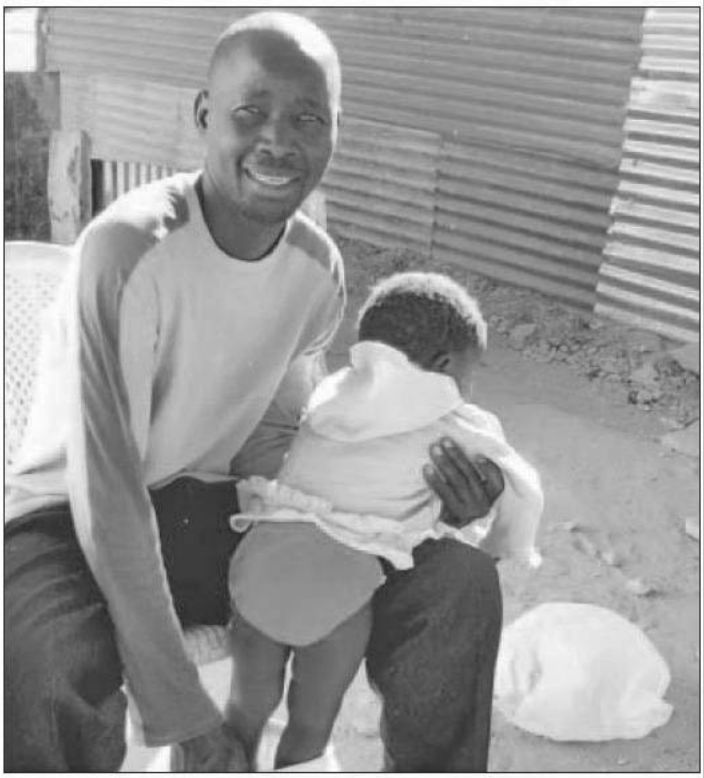
Some women also oppose paternity leave on the basis that men are not competent to care for children. Marang Morakaladi says she does not see the need for paternity leave as, "no man would do a good job like a mother would and no woman would feel at ease having left a man in charge of the baby."

Morakaladi concedes that some men can be good caretakers but argues that mothers are at an advantage due to "a mother's instincts." She says this is not a stereotype: "it's just being realistic."

Tshepo Kwapa, Founder of Voice of Men, an organisation that fights for men's rights to their children, supports the need for paternity leave. He believes men and women should have equal rights when it comes to being involved in their children's lives as currently the law only favours women over men.

Having looked after his seven months old baby for a month all alone, Kwapa knows that given the chance men can also look after babies equally well. With the advent of disposable nappies, ready-made baby foods, washing machines and feeding bottles things have been made easier for men too.

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*More and more fathers are sharing the care of infants, and need leave as much as their wives.*

Produced during Business Unusual Botswana, published in The Southern Times 24 February — 2 March 2008

*Reporting Women's Legal Rights*

Piloted in December 2007 in Maputo, Mozambique by CMFD (Community Media for Development) Productions, for Konrad Adenaur Stiftung the aim of this one-week course is to build the capacity of women radio journalists to investigate and report on women's rights within legal frameworks. This activity is particularly timely as there is an ongoing campaign to popularise the Africa Union Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, and in August 2008 the SADC Heads of State will once again be called on review the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. At the time of the workshop, Mozambique was also considering a domestic violence law. Working with 8 radio journalists, the training included discussion on national and international commitments and related

women's rights issues as a way of holding leaders accountable. The training combines knowledge and capacity building with producing content. In this way, journalists are able to immediately put what they are learning into practice, and tangible outputs are created. The strength of this workshop is that it focused on reporting legal rights from the perspective of government commitments. Political reporting often tends to neglect women's rights issues, and as such this training aimed to strengthen and provide a new perspective on political reporting.

**Participatory Media**

Along with mainstream media, participatory media is increasingly gaining recognition for increasing access to media, particularly among marginalised communities. Research and experience in the field of communication and media for development (and other sectors) suggests that participation of the people and communities that a project or programme is being designed for is considered key to the success and impact that the initiative will have. Communication and media programmes focusing on participation often attempt to address lack of access to media and lack of opportunities to communicate and advocate needs and priorities by developing strategies that work with community members to help provide opportunities for these stories, voices, and opinions to be heard. Participation and outreach to hard to reach and diverse communities can be important strategies for tackling social exclusion.

Participation is not about consultation, but rather facilitating a process that amplifies the voices that are not heard at every possible step. Participation facilitates the exercise of people's decision-making power and promotes higher levels of self-reliance. Of course, participation will vary according to the situation. In some cases, involving those affected is not possible at the beginning of a project. A step-by-step approach to participation may be more appropriate for individuals and groups historically reluctant to participate in development programmes or who mistrust "external interventions." In every case, increasing opportunities for participation by those directly affected by a problem or issue is crucial.

For example, participation in health and development communication programmes can strengthen the voice of ordinary citizens and ensure their involvement in decisions that affect them, their families, and their communities. It has been widely documented that participation can increase the impact of health and development programs and lead to long-term sustainability. Individuals and groups actively involved become committed and feel increasingly capable of improving their health and living conditions. Those directly affected by the issue addressed in a health and development program have wisdom, abilities, and experience the programme can and should build on (Tapia et al 2007).

This means that women make radio programmes for and about women; youth develop youth-oriented HIV dramas, migrant workers access media to make documentaries about their lives, etc. Access to media is a vital part of political access, because of its power as an advocacy tool, and in ensuring that elected politicians, female or male, hear about issues affecting various sectors of the population. Media can both bring issues to the forefront, and can help hold leaders accountable if they fail to adhere to commitments.

*"This workshop taught me to be responsible. It also taught me to be patient with people. When coming here I had so many unresolved issues but when interviewing some people I found I was healed. I also learned how to approach people, how to do a radio program, edit scripts, which I had no clue about."*
*- Rural Woman, South Africa (anonymous evaluation)*

*"We have learnt how we can influence our community." – participant, Kenya (anonymous evaluation)*

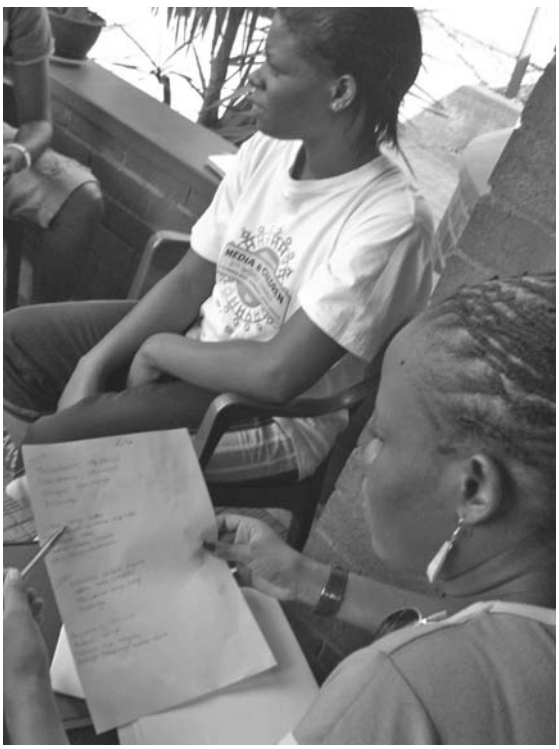
*Rural Women's Radio*

As part of a three-part project initiated by FAHAMU Networks for Social Justice and in collaboration with local partners, CMFD worked with rural women in South Africa, Kenya, and Sierra Leone to produce radio/ podcast programmes about women's rights, especially related to rural women. Each of the workshops was conducted in a participatory way, with the participants, who were mostly women from rural communities, identifying issues and priorities, as well as conducting interviews and producing on-site radio programmes that could be distributed to radio stations, community groups, and distributed through Pambazuka podcasts. In each of the three countries – South Africa, Kenya and Sierra Leone – women came together to participate in an 8-day workshop. Together they produced radio programming in issues as diverse as women's inheritance rights, HIV/AIDS, early marriage, elections, and access to health care. The collective voices from the three countries show that in many cases rural women from all over the continent face the same issues when it comes to access to health and rights. Yet these programmes also very clearly show that given the opportunity everyone, even people who have never held a microphone or conducted interviews, who may not be literate, or be considered to be "experts," have a voice and the abilities to make it heard.

Rural women are very rarely heard in the media, and even more rarely do they have the opportunity to actually create media. Using a microphone and recorder, they have the opportunity to actually ask police officers, traditional leaders, lawyers, and other community members about why they face discrimination, poverty and gross violations of their rights. This project was created to both produce programmes that actually speak to the issues that these women face, and also empower those who participated through learning new skills and new confidence in finding a way to make their voices heard.

*Musicians Against Xenophobia*

South Africa, especially Johannesburg, is home to thousands of foreign Africans. Some are refugees, fleeing persecution and seeking asylum; others are looking for work and a better life. Many find that life is not what they expected. They face discrimination from government services, harassment by police and degrading treatment from people, whether in the taxis, schools, shops or streets. Initiated by CMFD and supported by MMINO, the project aimed to address xenophobia through the popular medium of music. The musicians worked together with migrants and young people to create three songs that get to the heart of the matter.



Singer Judith Mudau (bottom right) working with researchers, Cindy Dzanya (left), developing lyrics against xenophobia
*Credit: Deborah Walter*

This is a clear example of the varied forms of participation, and how creative strategies can be employed to

create opportunities for participation, as far as possible. Quality considerations meant that professional musicians were needed to write and create music, yet participation is still a key strategy. Firstly, the musicians involved were a diverse group from South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Since it was not possible for the musicians to work directly with a large group of migrants, prior to the recording session CMFD interviewed over 100 migrants and 40 South Africans in community-based surveys to better understand how people experience and perceive xenophobia. The overwhelming majority told about how they personally suffered from discrimination, including from police and health services.

These surveys were collated, and drafted into a creative brief for the musicians. Researchers, also a diverse group from South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Angola, were on hand to answer any questions that the musicians had and share their own experiences and what they learned during the course of the surveys. The musicians were then tasked with putting together words to give voice to these experiences.

**Challenges to participatory media**

Participatory media has many practical challenges related to ways of involving these groups as well as a need to support special needs. Simply put, marginalised communities are sometimes hard to reach. Not accustomed to being included, they may even be suspicious of programmes. Moreover many, especially women and girls, have so many responsibilities and often rely on male decision-makers for the ability to even be involved, they can be hard to engage.

Participation of diverse communities may involve extra steps, planning, and funding, and require programme managers, funders and other stakeholders to be very flexible in their expectations. For example, for a programme to be truly participatory, a programme manager may identify rights as a topic, but what rights to be covered should be largely left to the group, along with how to approach the issue.

Participatory media can take many forms, and this is increasing with new forms of community media. This can include theatre, community radio, oral testimonies, digital stories, etc. In all of these, there must be a view to quality. However, quality becomes even more important when creating participatory media for mainstream distribution. Whether developing a special gender-related supplement for insertion in a newspaper, creating radio programmes with children, or producing documentaries by and for migrants, no media outlet will accept poor quality productions for mainstream use. Moreover, poor quality productions will not be read or listened to, and thus not serve the intended purpose.

Similarly, it must be recognised that participation must still have at its heart not only quality, but accuracy and good reporting principles. From the very outset, any programme that is considered participatory must make it clear to all parties that the production of a participatory media product is a collaboration between those who have the technical knowledge and those who have the on-the ground expertise and the responsibility of making change (both equally important.) For example, poor quality information about HIV or gender stereotyping should never be allowed to enter into a radio programme because it is "participatory." Likewise, if you are producing a radio programme that will go on air, a sound engineer will need to assist participants until they have gained the requisite skills. What is most important is that at every stage, participants are actively involved as much as possible, and facilitators with the technical expertise are clear that their role is to amplify the voices of participants.

**Conclusion**

It is clearly evident that media and communities would benefit from increased interaction, and that this is good journalism. Though some may argue that when NGOs and social movements engage with media it results in a biased agenda, evidence shows that media is missing the mark when it comes to many communities and issues. Given this, and the under-resourced nature of many news-rooms, it

then makes sense that media and NGOs "partner" in terms of mutual learning. As well, media itself can benefit from greater diversity of voices.

This can take the form of training, and working with organisations who are creating participatory media. Since it is unlikely that media houses will begin participatory processes, this is another area for a partnership of sorts. None of this needs to impact on media impartiality, but rather create new perspectives and stories that better represent the population as a whole.

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Time to involve the media in poverty reduction

**Writers Bio**
Deborah Walter is the editor of the Gender Links Opinion and Commentary Service and Director of CMFD (Community Media for development) Productions.

# Gender and Media Campaigns

## Women face discrimination from the men

DUMISANI REBOMBO

LONG before anyone had heard of HIV/Aids, women and girls faced discrimination and oppression based on gender.

HIV and Aids merely exacerbated the inequalities in Southern Africa.

While an analysis of gender often focuses on women, rigid gender roles affect the health of both men and women.

There are long-standing socio-cultural factors that make women and girls in Southern Africa more vulnerable to HIV.

Although there have been some positive changes, women are usually less educated and, by extension, less economically independent than men, and disproportionately saddled with household work.

Moreover, in most Southern African countries, the lack of good legal structures, or their poor implementation, allows discrimination against women.

The question of unequal gender relations is one of the most serious factors that fuels the pandemic. For example, many women are not able to negotiate safer sex or make overall decisions about their reproductive health.

sent to the nation and there are few positive men as role models. By not teaching men to reform such behaviour, or not including them in projects, our efforts to curb the spread of HIV/Aids will not work.

In South Africa, research shows that HIV/Aids messages have reached more than 80% of the population. Yet, why do we still have the highest number of new infections? Why do we have high rates of stigma and gender-based violence, and little behavioural change?

In Uganda, the central message for the nation was "no" to multiple sexual partners, including casual sex. South Africa sends out messages that portray HIV as both life-threatening and filled with hope.

Different kinds of messages can cause confusion, particularly when people are struggling to identify their own gender roles.

Swaziland recently launched centralised HIV messaging. One set of messages talks about the need for life and the other about being faithful to one partner. I believe this will yield a positive response from the nation

Jacob Zuma Trial




## Demand safe sex: First Lad

By Violet Mongo

Zambian First Lady Maureen Mwanawasa is encouraging women to demand safer sex from their partners, not negotiate for it. Mwanawasa made the statement at the launch of the FC2 female condom campaign at the Lusaka City market on 19 October.

"Negotiating for safer sex is a term that has become accepted world wide, yet, it puts a woman at the mercy of a man," Mwanawasa told the market crowd. "I do not believe that a woman should negotiate for safer sex, but demand safer sex."

Mwanawasa added that safer sex is achievable if leaders, and women themselves, take up the challenge. Mwanawasa's statements point out how important women's empowerment and gender equality is to reducing the escalating numbers of women living with HIV.

With World AIDS Day just less than a month now, the new product is a welcome addition to the market in the country. Zambia, like other countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa, is struggling to cope with the impact of HIV/AIDS. Women are the hardest hit.

At the end of 2005, UNAIDS and the World Health Organization estimated that in Zambia 17% of people aged 15-49 years old were living with HIV or AIDS. Of those million adults, 57% were women. Young women aged 15-19 are around six times more likely to be living with HIV than are males of the same age.

One of the reasons for greater vulnerability is gender inequality. Women disproportionately bear the burden of poverty and continue to be victims of widespread and persistent discrimination in all areas of life. They are also the primary agents of child welfare and put their lives at risk every time they become pregnant.

Women also play an indispensable role in the management of natural resources, economic development, and education. They have the right to gain as much as men from the benefits brought by globalisation. If not addressed, HIV/AIDS will make it even harder for women to play their role in the development of the country.

The first lady took time hand out free samples of the condom and talk to the pressing market crowd, made of mostly women, to explain the advantages of using protective measures during sex. Her actions should be an example in the country, and the region as a whole, to inspire both individuals and leaders to ensure protection of women.

"The first lady must be commended for the job well done, it is the first to happen in Zambia where the first lady goes to mix with women from the densely populated areas and distribute the condoms herself, women must emulate her," said one of the recipients of condoms at the market.

Women often have very limited opportunities to demand safer sex, due to unequal power relationships within relationships. Interventions are rarely designed to be more user friendly accessible and available to them. Designing



*Sharon Phiri giving a demonstration on how to use female condom.*



*Zambian First Lady Maureen Mwanawasa distributes female condoms in Lusaka recently.*

egment of effective strategies to empower women and address issues of gender inequality, as well as challenge gender norms that predisposed women to infection.

Unless governments and service providers address these gender inequalities, it will be difficult for women to protect themselves. As first Lady Maureen Mwanawasa points out, it is time for women demand the protection and equality that is their right.

Violet Mongo writes for the Daily Zambia and is a member of the Gen Media Southern African (GEMSA) N This article is part of the Gender Links and Commentary Service





# Making Every Voice Count: a Southern Africa Case Study

By Colleen Lowe Morna

**Abstract**

The Gender and Media Baseline Study, conducted in southern Africa in 2003, revealed glaring gender disparities in the media and in its editorial content. With its goal to "promote gender equality in and through the media," Gender Links (GL) has worked with a broad range of partners to try to redress these gaps through research, advocacy, and training, targeting media producers, those who influence news content, and consumers. GL, and the Gender and Media Southern Africa (GEMSA) network that it hosts, are also developing a Gender and Media Diversity Centre, to enhance the sharing of knowledge in this important but relatively new area of work.

**Key words**

gender, media, activism

## Gender in the media

During question time after a presentation to the South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF) on the Gender and Media Baseline Study in June 2003, an editor asked the billion-dollar question: Where in the world is there gender balance in the media? And if no such place exists, why should South Africa be any different?

Some weeks later, at another gathering, the answer came to me more clearly than I could articulate it at the time. Why is it, I asked, that in relation to every other issue, South Africa wants to be measured by, and exceed, world standards? Yet when it comes to gender, we are happy to be counted with or below the lowest common denominator! There is no other country, I said, that understands the pain of being silenced as intrinsically as South Africa. Why then can't we take the lead where gender and the media are concerned?

This question is at the heart of the work of Gender Links (GL), a non-governmental organisation (NGO) based in South Africa, that over the last six years has gained a reputation as a "small organisation with large footprints," (Mupawaenda and Minnie 2006), in its bid to "promote gender equality in and through the media." This paper explores how GL, working with key strategic partners, has sought to position itself in relation to the mainstream media,

based on an understanding that "we have no choice but to grapple with the lion in its den."[1] It provides the context and background to gender and media work in southern Africa, the strategies employed, an assessment of whether or not these strategies are working, and discusses some future challenges.

**Context**

Twelve years after the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, gender disparities in the media remain significant. Across the globe, women are grossly under-represented in the decision-making structures of the media. The only news- making category in which women predominate, as evidenced in all three Global Media Monitoring Projects[2], is that of TV producers. The Global Media Monitoring Project, conducted before the Beijing conference, showed that women constituted 17 % of "news sources," that is those whose views and voices are consulted and relayed in news reports. Five years later, that had increased by a mere 1 % to 18 %, and ten years later (in 2005) to 21 %. At this rate, it will take more than a few lifetimes for the media to reflect the views of women and men equally!

In 2002, GL, the Media Institute of Southern Africa and the Media Monitoring Project of South Africa conducted the Gender and Media Baseline Study, covering 12 southern African countries. This study found that women constitute 19 % of news sources in South Africa and that black women, who constitute 41 % of the population, account for a mere seven % of news sources. Across the 12 countries of the southern African region, women constituted 17 % of news sources (Gender Links and Media Institute of Southern Africa 2003).

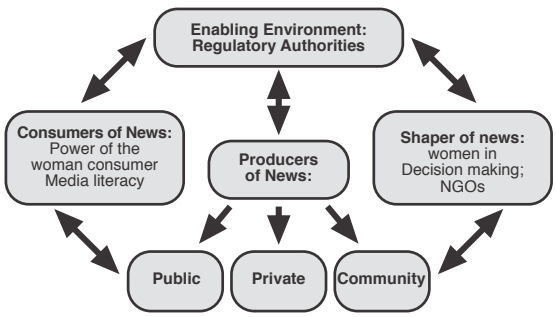
While women politicians in southern Africa account for about 20 % of politicians, they accounted for only eight percent of the politicians whose voices were actually heard during news broadcasts. The study found that women's voices are virtually absent in a range of mainstream areas, including the economy, politics, and sport, and that older women are effectively missing from news pages. Women are most likely to be portrayed as homemakers, fashion models, or as victims of violence, and rarely as citizens participating in the building of their nation (Gender Links and Media Institute of Southern Africa 2003).

**Strategies for change**

Organisations pressing for change have used several different approaches to the issue of women's representation and portrayal in the media. These include:

- empowering women journalists;
- creating alternative media for women's voices to be heard, particularly low-cost Internet and email-based media;
- organising consumer protests and boycotts, especially against offensive advertising; and
- seeking to bring about gender balance in the institution of the media as well as in its editorial content.

Figure 1: Approaches to gender and the media




None of these strategies are mutually exclusive. Each touches in some way on altering the behaviour of three groups of people from whom action is required: those who produce the news; those who are well placed to shape the news; and those who consume the news. GL has specifically chosen to focus on the last approach, because in the long term we believe there is no alternative to ensuring that the mainstream media reflect and promote gender equality.

**Activist research and networks**

*Gender and media summits*

Media monitoring is one of the most powerful tools for holding the media to account. The Global Media Monitoring Project and the Gender and Media Baseline

Study have been at the centre of GL's advocacy strategies, as has the strategic alliance with the Media Institute of Southern Africa, the mainstream media institution that promotes freedom of expression in the region.

National action-planning workshops took place in all 12 southern African countries that participated in the Gender and Media Baseline Study in 2003. During the workshops, media practitioners, decision-makers, analysts, and activists devised a range of strategies for addressing gender disparities in the media. The workshops culminated in a Gender and Media Summit in 2004, where representatives from each country reported on practical strategies they had adopted to achieve greater gender balance and sensitivity in coverage.

The summit also led to the formation of the Gender and Media Southern Africa (GEMSA) network. The GEMSA secretariat is based at Gender Links, and now includes 12 institutional members, and over 300 individual members, in ten countries where local GEMSA chapters have been registered. The second Gender and Media Summit took place in September 2006, held under the banner "Media diversity, good for democracy, good for business." Both summits featured the now well-known Gender and Media Awards. The awards served to make the point that gender-aware reporting is primarily about good, thorough, thought-provoking, investigative journalism.

*Mirror on the Media reports*

Following the ground breaking study on Gender and Advertising in Southern Africa which was launched in July 2007, Gender Links has extended the Gender and Media quarterly trends survey to tabloids. Other research that has been conducted includes *"Who talks on radio talk shows"* and *"Who makes the news"* which is an analysis of the 2005 GMMP findings in Southern Africa. The latest study which is the 6th edition of the Mirror on the Media series focuses on (Gender and tabloids in Southern Africa). This research focused on gender representation and portrayal in tabloids and audience responses to this. This is the first time that GL and GEMSA have conducted research on tabloids.

**Audiences, consumers, and media literacy**

*Audience Research*

Audience research conducted by GL in collaboration with partners shows that across the board, women and men would like to see women depicted in more diverse roles, and that they find sexual images in the media uncomfortable and degrading to women. The research also showed that both women and men would like more local and human-interest news, and that women would like more news on women's rights (Lowe Morna, Rama, and Muriungi 2005). Research such as this begins to debunk the commercial arguments for sexist coverage. It also opens an important new area of work, around media consumers and media literacy.

*Media Literacy*

In this course, participants learn how gender biases creep into media construction, how monitoring and audience research are conducted, and how they, as citizens, can engage with the media. Building on the successes of the pilot phases of the media literacy course between 2006 and 2007, Gender Links seeks to roll out this project in the region. The pilot to date included a training of members of the public, a training of trainers course, and a one week course with high school learners.




Loga Virahsawmy, media Watch Organisation and GL board member at Gender Advertising in Southern Africa launch *Credit: Trevor Davies*

**Policy**

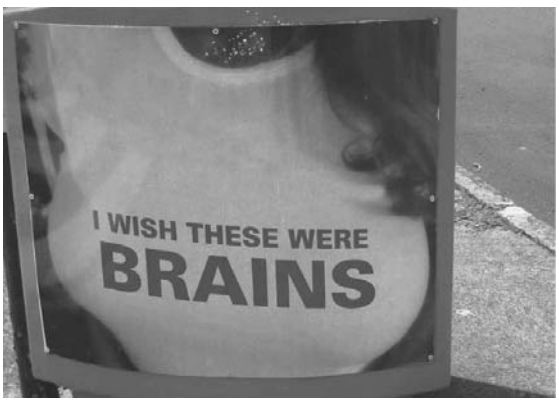
From the outset, GL has stressed that activism and research must be rooted in policy, to bring about sustained change. Policy changes need to be at both the national and the regional level, as well as within newsrooms themselves.

*Media regulation bodies*

GEMSA has conducted a gender audit of media laws and institutions in the region, and is developing a network of media regulators. Working with GEMSA, GL embarked on a pilot project last year with media regulators in three countries, to develop gender policies. These include two self-regulation bodies, the Press Council of Botswana and the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) of Mauritius, and a statutory regulator, the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority.

The case of ASA Mauritius is a good example of how consumer activism in some countries is bringing about change. The Mauritius Media Watch Organisation, the local chapter of GEMSA, has taken up various complaints with ASA Mauritius, as a result of which 12 advertisements have been removed from the airwaves and from billboards. These included posters on dustbins wishing that women's breasts were brains (see illustration). As a result of this pressure, the advertising body has been forced to take note of gender as a factor in its work.

This advertisement from Mauritius was the subject of a complaint made by the Mauritius Media Watch Organisation. As a result, the advertisement was removed.




*Working with media organisations to develop gender policies*

Over the period 2003-2004, GL worked on pilot projects developing gender policies with media organisations in the region. These were presented at the first Gender and Media summit, where media managers shared some of the simple practical steps they had taken to improve gender balance and sensitivity in the news.

At Kaya FM, a commercial radio station in South Africa that took part in one of the pilot projects, practical steps included rotating the gender "beat," or area, of news coverage, so that each reporter had a chance to cover it. The idea was that in so doing, reporters would learn how to integrate gender issues into all their coverage. In addition, each reporter was required to contribute at least four women's contact details to the database of news sources, and to ensure that one out of every four sources they consulted was a woman.

Progress in all these areas was then reviewed at weekly editorial meetings. A favourite anecdote of the then news editor, Portia Kobue, concerns the day she assigned a reporter to do a story on farming, and he immediately phoned the white male spokesperson of the commercial farmers' association. She sent him back to the field to find a black woman farmer, who told a far more interesting story!

*Media Action Plan*

In an attempt to increase the impact of their policy work, in 2005 media NGOs joined forces with the Southern African Editors' Forum (SANEF) to launch the Media Action Plan (MAP). Projects so far have focused on HIV, AIDS, and gender, and on the small numbers of women working in the media at senior levels.

An audit undertaken by GL as part of MAP showed that out of 350 media organisations surveyed, only ten percent had HIV and AIDS policies, and only eight per cent had gender policies. Among the objectives of MAP are to ensure that 80 % of media institutions have workplace and editorial policies and programmes on HIV and AIDS and gender in place by the end of

2008. At the time of writing, 55% of media houses had committed to this idea and 30% had drafted gender aware HIV and AIDS policies.

**Training**

From the outset, GL has developed close links with media training institutions. A media training needs assessment undertaken by GL for the media training sector showed that more than half of the journalists in the region have never undertaken formal journalism training, but that there is a move towards upgrading and requiring higher level media training (Lowe Morna and Khan 2002).

Many media training institutions run short in-service courses, for people who are already working as journalists. Early on, GL worked with the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism in South Africa, to develop gender training modules for all areas of in-service media training, from sub-editing and newsroom leadership to coverage of specific areas like crime, the economy, and politics. Since then, GL has run training courses on different themes, with in-service media training institutions throughout the region. These have included courses on gender violence, HIV,AIDS, and gender, and gender and elections. Currently, GL is running a series of training workshops on gender and economic reporting entitled "Business Unusual."

In the longer term, there are no shortcuts to mainstreaming gender into entry-level media education. Working with GL, the Polytechnic of Namibia undertook a three- year gender-mainstreaming project in which gender was integrated into every facet of the polytechnic's entry-level journalism courses, and tested in a student news agency set up for the 2005 elections in Namibia. The students' increased sensitivity to diversity resulted in high quality, issue-based coverage documented in a final evaluation. A primer on the process and outcomes is being used as a basis for work with a network of media trainers committed to integrating gender into their curricula (Lowe Morna and Shilongo 2004).

**Building bridges between gender activists and the media**

GL acknowledges that the challenge is not just to make the media more gender sensitive, but also to make gender activists more media aware. GL's training manual, *Getting Smart: Strategic Communications for Gender Activists* (Lowe Morna and Overland 2002) has been used to conduct training with women's organisations across the region, with a specific focus on the Sixteen Days of Activism campaign that runs from 25 November to 10 December.

The GL Opinion and Commentary Service is another "bridging mechanism," that involves working with gender activists, who write articles that GL edits and markets to the mainstream media. As part of this service, GL has also started various 'I' story series, first-hand accounts on subjects such as living with



Rhodes BU participants from left- Henrietta Banda, Palesa Mopedi and Theresa Hayward. *Credit: Trevor Davies*

HIV, surviving gender violence, or being a woman in local government. This series has been especially popular with the mainstream media and audiences, because of its strong human- interest value.

In response to the argument frequently given by people working in the media that "there are no women sources", Media Watch Organisation in Mauritius took the initiative to profile 218 women (along with their contact information), all experts in their own fields, who can talk on a wide range of issues, including culture, economics, the environment, human rights, and politics, among others. The directory is a practical example of how activists and the media can work together to improve the representation of women in the media.

**Making progress?**

Measuring progress in any area of social change poses major challenges. Yet there is a need to measure and record even small successes. In late 2008, GL and partner organisations will repeat the Gender and Media Baseline Study and HIV baseline studies, to gauge if there has been any improvement since the first studies were completed.

As an interim measuring exercise, GL worked with the Media Monitoring Project in South Africa to measure progress in the region against the Global Media Monitoring Project study in 2005, as well as against the 2003 Gender and Media Baseline Study.

Overall, the number of women consulted as news sources in the region had increased from 17 %, as recorded in the Gender and Media Baseline Study in 2003, to 19 % in the Global Media Monitoring Project in 2005 (compared with the global average of 21 %). However, in countries where gender and media activism had been strongest, the increases were higher, for example from 19 % to 26 % in South Africa, and from 17 % to 24 % in Mauritius and Namibia. Only two countries (Botswana and Angola) slipped backwards.

An innovation in the 2005 Global Media Monitoring Project study is that it records what different sources are asked to talk about, and why they are consulted. When GL undertook this exercise for southern Africa, the findings showed that, as compared to men in each of the categories, women are least likely to be the subjects or focus of the event or story (23 %), to be official spokespersons (16 %), or to be experts and commentators (20 per cent). They are more likely to be consulted for "human interest", or to recount personal experiences (25 %), as eyewitnesses (37 %), or as part of popular opinion surveys (43 %). These last three categories are the ones in which, overall, the smallest number of sources is consulted.

Two important conclusions can be drawn from this. One is that a deliberate effort needs to be made to ensure that more women are consulted as the main subjects of news reports, as official spokespersons, and as experts or commentators. The other is that journalists working in the region need to use a more balanced range of news sources. At the moment, reporting tends to be oriented towards covering individual events, and to rely on single, invariably male, news sources. The news is dominated by reports of what ministers or decision makers (usually men) say about a particular event or issue, with little or no comment from those most affected (often women).

This is not good journalism, by any definition. Getting away from the single source, official, or pronouncement that dominates the news is not only good journalism; it would also open more space in which women's voices could be heard. It would turn the media into the tool that it should be in society, giving voice to the voiceless and ensuring that citizens women and menare able to participate meaningfully indemocratic processes.

**Going forward**

While it is understandable that advocacy efforts to date have focused specifically on gender disparities in the media, as we move forward there is a need to situate these within broader debates on human rights, media diversity, ethics and professionalism in the media, growing markets, and media sustainability. This approach will not

only help to overcome the resistance that is apparent in some quarters, but will also foster the notion that gender awareness is not just a matter of being "politically correct"; it is also a question of enlightened self interest.

Against this background, GL and GEMSA, working with tertiary institutions and other media development partners, have established a Gender and Media Diversity Centre. The GMDC has a physical base at the offices of the two organisations, but is primarily a virtual knowledge management and exchange centre, that aims to promote diverse, representative, and responsive media. Given the global nature of the gender gaps in the media, which cut across the broader divides in ownership and access, it is hoped that the centre will eventually extend its influence well beyond this region, to bring a keen appreciation of why fairness and diversity are important at all levels of society, including the media.

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**Writers Bio**
Colleen Lowe Morna is executive director of Gender Links, which she founded in 2001, and chairperson of the Gender and Media Southern Africa (GEMSA) Network. Lowe Morna worked as a journalist and editor in various posts in southern Africa, and as Africa Editor of the New Delhi- based Women's Feature Service, before working for the Commonwealth Secretariat for seven years. She also served as founding CEO of the South African Commission on Gender Equality.

## Notes

[1]Former GL Chairperson Thenjiwe Mtintso, speaking at the launch of the organisation in 2001.
[2]The Global Media Monitoring Project is an ongoing study that documents the participation and portrayal of women and men in the world's news media, at five- yearly intervals. Studies have so far been carried out in 1995, 2000, and most recently in 2005 (Gallagher 2005). For more information, see www.whomakesthenews.org/about_us/what_is_gmmp (last accessed June 2007).

**In Practice: SADC Gender and Development Protocol Campaign**




More and more gender, and other, activists are refining their advocacy strategies to take greater advantage of media as an important tool in campaigns. Media coverage has the power to sway both public opinion and policy priorities. Activists who are able to engage with media, both in terms of producing content and encouraging journalists to be more aware of certain issues, are more likely to see their issues at the forefront of national, and international agendas. A case in point is the SADC Gender and Development Protocol Campaign.

The Southern Africa Gender Protocol Alliance (the Alliance), a network of more than 16 organisations[1] and individual experts from the SADC region, launched an advocacy campaign in 2005 for the adoption, ratification and implementation of a SADC Gender and Development Protocol (the Protocol). This is in support of the efforts by the Gender Unit (SADC GU) in the SADC Secretariat which has been spearheading this intergovernmental process in the region.

The adoption of a Protocol, a legally binding instrument, by SADC governments, will pave the way towards consolidating the region's commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as accelerating delivery on those commitments; there are clear benchmarks and measurable targets outlined in the proposed Protocol. The Protocol was deferred for further consultations by SADC Heads of State in August 2007, and it is to be resubmitted for adoption at Summit 2008. The Alliance is currently being coordinated by GL, and a number of activities have been undertaken during the course of the year.

**Campaign Objectives**

- Making technical inputs into all drafts and processes relating to the Protocol
- Engaging with key stakeholders at all levels to influence the process and content of the Protocol
- Participating at all key meetings to ensure that all substantive Protocol issues are on the agenda
- Producing briefing notes, brochures and other materials for use by stakeholders
- Engaging the media at national and regional levels to profile the Protocol processes
- Skills building of Alliance members to effectively implement campaign activities

**Engaging with the Media**

*Commentaries and Supplements*

Media is a vital component of the strategy to advocate for the adoption of a comprehensive Protocol. Aside from writing numerous articles and opinion pieces for circulation in national and regional media, GL produced a news supplement *Lentsoe La Basali – Women's Voices'* in time for Summit 2007. The Supplement was distributed in one of the widest circulating newspapers in Zambia, the 2007 host country for the Summit, as well as to Summit delegates and other civil society groupings. It is also one the flagships of the Alliance Protocol campaign, as it has continued to be distributed to other countries after the Summit as an awareness raising tool. In January 2008, Alliance members developed articles and opinion pieces for a news supplement scheduled for publication in April 2008 in time for the SADC Heads of State Poverty Summit to be held in Mauritius. The news supplements and regular articles are accompanied by press releases at key moments of the campaign where specific issues for action are highlighted in the media.

*Alliance Members' Skills Building*

The focus of the skills building training for Alliance members is that they should be informed by and applied to the Protocol campaign strategies. Media is a critical tool for mobilising and raising the profile of the Protocol, so Alliance members participated in two training sessions on writing for media. The training are undertaken in tandem to other meetings, and concrete outputs are opinion or commentary pieces that are published regionally. In January 2008, Alliance members pitched at least 15 story ideas and developed them into opinions and commentaries for an upcoming news supplement. All outputs raise the issues that are at the core of the civil society campaign for the adoption of the Protocol.

*Materials Production*

GL, on behalf of the Alliance, produced brochures with fact sheets on key issues in the Protocol as well as posters, during the course of the year. These have been widely distributed nationally and regionally and serve as an important information source on the significance of the Protocol process. Each of the fact sheets are valuable resources for media, provide key facts and issues at a glance. More materials are planned for 2008.

Notes

[1] The Alliance Members are the Botswana Council of NGOs (BOCONGO); Federation of African Media Women (FAMW) – SADC; Gender Links (GL); Gender and Media Southern Africa Network (GEMSA); Justice and Peace (Lesotho); Malawi Council of Churches; Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA); NGO Gender Coordination Network Malawi; SAFAIDS; Society for Women and AIDS in Africa Zambia (SWAAZ); Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF); Women in Law in Southern Africa (WLSA); Women, Land and Water Rights Southern Africa (WLWRSA); Women in Politics CaucusBotswana; Women's Leadership Centre Namibia; Young Women's Christian Association Botswana (YWCA); Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre (ZWRCN).



## Media Activism and the 16 Days of Activism

By Loveness Jambaya Nyakujarah

**Abstract**

Activists have employed multiple strategies to use the media as an advocacy tool. This has often been received with mixed reactions by media practitioners who view their role as being the mirror of society and imparting information in the manner that they receive it. On the other hand activists see the media, when used effectively and responsibly, as holding the potential for effecting social transformation. Media coverage of Sixteen Days of Activism against Gender Violence has largely gravitated towards media activism over the years. This was initially instigated by gender activists but journalists and media houses are increasingly being proactive as they begin to feel that it is their duty to report on the campaign as a contribution towards ending the scourge.

**Key words**

media activism, gender violence, Sixteen Days of Activism, social change

### Defining media activism

Media activism is activism that uses media and communication technologies for social change. Americans refer to this as civic or public journalism which "seeks to extend the work of the press (media) beyond news pages into civic life itself. (It is) not about agenda setting by the media/journalists but strives to take the responsibility of agenda setting back to the community." It works hard to get real people's voices into stories and seeks to show not just life's problems but the possibilities that exist as people seek solutions (Ukpabi 2001). Alternatively it could also be viewed as communication for social change which is defined as a process of public and private dialogue through which people define who they are, what they want and how they can get it.

Sixteen Days of Activism is the period between 25 November (International Day of No Violence against Women) and 10 December (World AIDS Day) used to raise awareness on violence against women.

### Why media activism

Media forms a powerful tool which shapes public opinion and the social discourse. Media is an important, but not exclusive tool for advocacy. Coupled with the development of more gender sensitive media, Gender Links (GL) believes there is the need to sharpen the communication skills of activists in the gender field. Many gender initiatives have faltered for want of strategic and targeted interventions in the policy and decision making

processes, as well as being able to project campaigns such as Sixteen Days in the mainstream media. (UNICEF 2008)

The trends in media coverage of the Sixteen Days of Activism demonstrates the positive impact of activists engaging with the media to ensure events are covered and analyses provided. The trend has seen increased media coverage and resultantly increased public awareness of the campaign. This did not just come about overnight but has been a process of constant engagement.

Gender and media activists have employed multiple strategies to use the media as an advocacy tool. This has often been received with mixed reactions by media practitioners who view their role as being the mirror of society and imparting information in the manner that they receive it. Journalists argue that this is in the interest of maintaining objectivity.

Sometimes journalism's allegiance to "objectivity" often comes at a price of community understanding and engagement. For example a journalist participating in a blog contended, "I'm one of those who takes the dharma of being a journalist seriously, believing that the vocation brings with it certain responsibilities? But I don't think activism is one of them. The practical argument for that is that if all journalists took up activism for the causes they believed in, the good ones would eventually have no time left to actually write. More importantly, I believe that the function journalists ideally perform, of providing information and insight, is too important to be diluted by anything."

On the other hand activists see the media, when used effectively and responsibly, as holding the potential for effecting social transformation. Media coverage of Sixteen Days of Activism against Gender Violence has largely gravitated towards media activism over the years. This was initially instigated by gender activists but journalists and media houses are increasingly feeling it is their duty to report on the campaign as a contribution towards ending the scourge.



'On behalf of all men who are decent, kind and caring, I am sorry'

A warrior every day, not just for 16 days

*Comment*

**Jabulani Mamela**

I was born 25 years ago into a family of boys. The memories of my childhood are of pillow fights, checking which plate had more meat at supper time, crying my lungs out after discovering that the trousers I was supposed to wear to town that particular day had been taken by one of my brothers for his own use because his were dirty and mine looked damn fine.

It was a good life, depending on the circumstances you found yourself in on a particular day. School was great, thanks to the Grace of the Holy Mother, I could recall a lot of what the teacher had said the previous day and so spared myself that terrible long stick.

The year was 1998. My mother was expecting another baby. She had been crying a lot these days. We had

Those were tense moments that continued for days. We could all see that it was taking a toll on our mother, but we had no idea what to do.

Polishing my father's shoes became a chore rather than the ultimate glory (and the path to pocket money). Instead, we set up a duty roster, which also extended to opening the gate for his car at night.

On one night, after some fighting, our father packed his bags and left through that gate. My mother did not want us to see what was happening, but we were able to look through the windows of our bedrooms.

It was awful. At that moment we

of our way to make her feel at home, like a sister.

She was extremely beautiful and she brought our home to life. I remember how much I bragged about her to my friends.

I had never before seen my brothers speaking with one voice and doing one thing without fighting, but we managed to organise a school for her to attend.

She closed the door that my father had left open. I was happy to have her in my life. Things could not

and dignity for all, why, my brothers, are we trampling on the good works of people like Ms Lilian Ngoyi, Victoria Mxenge, Albertina Sisulu and all the others who put their lives on the line for our freedom?

I do not know what to say to my sister except that, on behalf of all men who are decent, kind and caring, I am sorry.

Every day I wake up and look at my blue uniform, and I feel inadequate because the sacrifices so many people made so that I could enjoy

**Constable Jabulani Mamela.** Photograph: Garth Stead

For instance, Narco News views its role on Latin America as "Combining journalistic integrity with a commitment to justice, Narco News has been an essential tool for anyone wanting to break through the corporate media's veil of ignorance and disinformation regarding Latin America."

**Measuring impact**

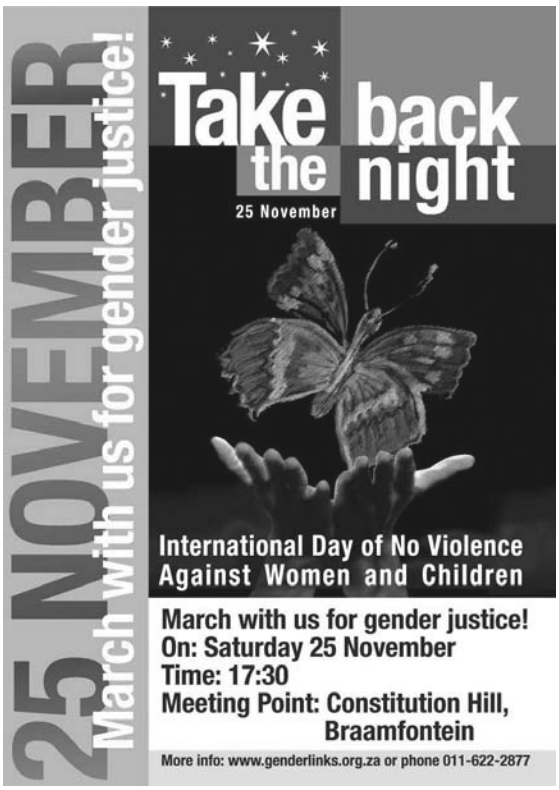
Media monitoring conducted by GL and Media Monitoring Project South Africa (MMPSA), since 2004 shows that there is a difference between the media coverage of gender based violence during the Sixteen Days of Activism Campaign compared to the rest of the year.

The numbers of stories on gender violence increase while more women are quoted as sources during this period. Stories of gender based violence are now referred to as such and are more likely to be put in context compared

to the usual sensationalisation. For example coverage of gender violence as a topic has increased since 2004 to 2006 from 20% to 33% to 59% of all topics.

The South Africa Government Communication Information Services (GCIS) among other things has tracked public awareness of Sixteen Days in 2003, 2005 and 2006. Over a 12 month period, awareness was rated at 16% in 2003, 26% in 2005 and 33% in 2006 on average. 2007 results were only available for the first two quarters at 32%. On further analysis during the peak time in the year, the actual Sixteen Days campaign period, awareness is even higher: 23% (2003); 31% (2005) and 41% (2006) with the 2007 results still unavailable.

This shows that more and more people have access to information about the campaign with GCIS tracking the medium through which the citizens surveyed obtained their information. The majority of respondents heard or saw the campaign via mainstream media (TV, radio & newspapers). Television (81%) & radio stations (46%) are the most used media. These are followed by newspapers (18%) and the "word of mouth" (12%) from family members & friends. Least used are media were magazines, pamphlets, outdoor media, *imbizo*, etc (Between 1-2 %)




Poster for "Take Back the Night," annual march to demonstrate against gender violence.

**How has this been achieved?**

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication (SC IHDC) and GL have used different strategies to engage with the media.

For instance SC IHDC uses edutainment which based on advocacy through "edutainment," which is a mixture of education and entertainment. The success in this approach lies in the fact that the mixed media used by SC IHDC is accessible at different levels, and powerfully persuasive as it is rooted in community experiences, as well as successfully responding to complex social and health issues. The information provided impacts on social norms, attitudes and practices, aimed at the individual, community and socio political environment. Violence prevention and children's life skills development are some of the key areas of focus.

GL engages with the media in a number of ways: providing gender aware ready to use content that is more analytical compared to event based reporting; media kit with fact sheets defining the issues for media as they sometimes do not have time to investigate and engage in debate with media practitioners during the period. GL has also pioneered Cyber Dialogues which provide a complete package for media during Sixteen Days. The organised face to face discussion and IT based dialogue provides sources from experts and ordinary people, they are thematic so the issues are well articulated and provide a space where those most affected are free to articulate themselves through cyber space. In addition GL also works with women who have suffered abuse to tell their stories through the 'I' Stories project and these are published in mainstream media. This has always proved to be therapeutic for victims who often emerge as survivors of gender violence by completion of the project.

## Next steps

It is quite evident that awareness of gender violence has increased in South Africa and the interface between media and gender activists has played a significant role in achieving this. However gender and media activists working with the media have to take the campaign a further step to move beyond awareness to actual behaviour change.In South Africa UNICEF, working with the National Prosecuting Authority – SOCA Unit and GL, conducted a mapping of promising violence prevention models available in South Africa that can be replicated. It was realised that one of the cornerstones of achieving this lies in media savvy, for example, NGOs such as GL and Soul City working with different media practitioners including new media (IT) to influence behaviour change. The objective will be have the public move from awareness to *gaining knowledge* to *attitude change* until gender violence has been eradicated.

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**Writers Bio**

Loveness Jambaya Nyakujarah is the Gender Justice Manager & Assistant Director at Gender Links.



## The Power of the "I" Story

By Mariette van Dijk

**Abstract**

The "I" Stories are a series of first hand accounts of gender violence from across Southern Africa produced annually by the Gender Links (GL) Opinion and Commentary Service for the Sixteen Days of Activism. These stories share women's real experiences with violence - domestic violence, child abuse, contracting HIV after sexual assault, being attacked because of their sexual orientation, and any other story that the women wish to tell. All these stories are powerful for different reasons; they are stories of abuse, but also of struggle and survival. For the writers they are empowering - telling their story often forms the transition from victim into survivor. For the media who pick up the stories it is a meaningful form of journalism to inform the public about gender based violence. For readers, the stories are often shocking and upsetting, yet through reading them, they become more aware of gender violence and its impact on their friends, families, and communities.

**Key words**

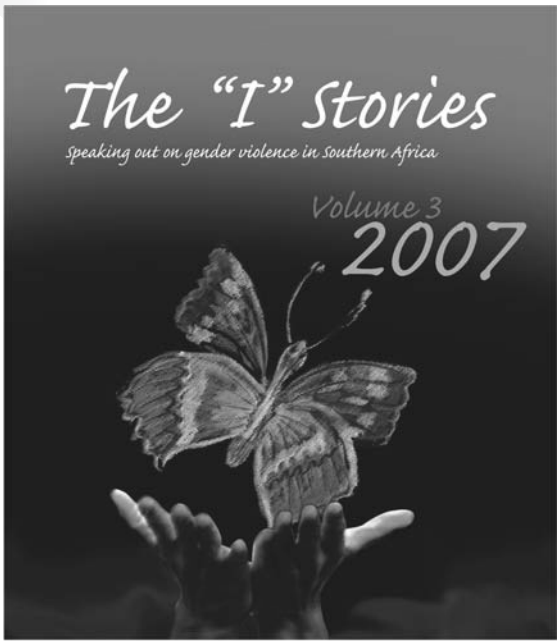
violence, Sixteen Days of Activism, media

## Introduction

The creation of the *"I" Stories* is a multi-part process. Though stories are invited from across the region, and local partners encouraged to hold country workshops, available resources to date has meant that the main workshop for the programme occurs in South Africa. Due to the sensitive nature of the stories, and the need for the women to have coaching in a supportive environment, these workshops are vital to the process.

Gender Links, in collaboration with organisations working with survivors of violence, invite participants who want to tell their story to a workshop co-facilitated with counsellors. In the supportive and open environment, survivors are more at ease to talk.

The women share their individual stories in small groups. For many women, this may be the very first time they have told someone about the abuse, and the session is often very painful. Afterwards, they each go away to




write the first drafts of their stories, which are typed out and edited for them. In a second session, the women come together to read their own edited story, which is often very comforting. For many of the participants, discussing their life stories with other women and turning them into a publication is therapeutic. Once the editing is agreed upon, the women decide if they would like to use their own name in the by-line, if they want to have their photo taken, and if they would like to participate in other types of media, for example, personal appearances, radio or television interviews. The boundaries set by the women are ALWAYS respected. The finished stories are compiled into a book, as well as distributed to mainstream media.

Although there is no empirical data to say that the *"I" Stories* project prevents gender-based violence, there is evidence that the stories create awareness and generate discussion, which may contribute to women leaving abusive relationships, greater incidences of reporting, as well as greater sensitisation of men in their role to prevent violence. The stories are also helpful in *secondary prevention*, which is helping women participants to deal with the emotional aftermath of abuse, and possibly sensitising service providers who may provide treatment and counselling to other women. They can also be an inspiration to other women who read the stories and who find themselves in abusive relationships to seek help.

*"These stories are not for your comfort, but are told with the rawness and pain with which they have been experienced.*

*They will shock and upset you… But they will also give you hope. Hope that women in our region are speaking out. Hope that many years too late politicians have recognised that women's rights are human rights. Hope that our best bet in getting action taken is by breaking the silence."*

- excerpted from the forward, "I" Stories 2006

**The power of telling your story – the case of Sweetness Gwabe**

Many participants say that the workshop and experience of participating in the project is very empowering. Sweetness Gwabe, one of the participants in the 2007 *"I" Stories* workshop says,

> When I was participating in the workshops at GL and told my story for the first time to others it was then that I realised how much I was hurt. I started breaking and crying in front of others, what I had never done before. It all came out. The interesting part of it was that when I read my own story, I asked myself 'how did I manage to stand all this nonsense for so long.' It shocked me to read my own story, especially because I started feeling guilty towards my children. That I have allowed them to undergo all of this and didn't pull out of it long ago. At the time I stayed because I wanted my children to have a father, because I had never known mine, but after reading my own story I felt responsible for their suffering.

While Gwabe grew up in a well-off, loving family, her self-esteem was gone by the time she finally, after years, left her abusive husband after another violent incident. Gwabe recalls, "While I was at the shelter I wrote a poem for a POWA (People Opposing Women Abuse)

competition, and afterwards they asked me to participate in the *"I" Stories.* They explained me what it was about and that the stories would be published. That time I was really afraid to be published and therefore I did not use my own name. When someone constantly tells you that you are worth nothing, you believe it and you just want to hide away. I also feared that my husband would hit back and publish against me and spread lies about me, because I know how he is."

Now, a few months down the line, she is happy and feeling confident with herself. "It has changed me tremendously. I realise who I am, a woman of multiple talents. I became myself and not what I have been told I am: useless. I am now a role model to my children. I walk in front of them and am confident, because I know that children who grow up in an abusive home often lack confidence. The way I feel now, I wish I had not hidden my name."

A lot has changed in the last months since Sweetness published her *I Story*. During her abusive marriage, Sweetness would sometimes run away, but it never solved anything. "I stayed at the Miriam Makeba orphanage from 2003 to 2005, while I was working there as a housemother. Then I went back to the house where my husband was staying. I needed to divorce him to really get away."

Since August 2006, she has been living with POWA, after a violent escalation.

> I didn't want to bother anybody else, so I separated myself from Makeba organisation and didn't ask help from relatives. After the publication of the *I Stories* I was interviewed by a television show Masekuleme (Lets Talk) during the 16 Days Campaign. They filmed me from behind (anonymously) but a social worker from Makeba home recognised me. Miriam Makeba found out and asked me to come back, which was now 2 weeks ago. Now she wants me to publish my poems and stories. I have written many for instance about Mandela and Apartheid. She also asked me to write and compose Xhosa songs for her. She realised that I am talented, but due to the abuse I was locked, but now she stimulates me to use my talents. It is frustrating when you know you are talented, but you can't do anything.
>
> Miriam Makeba never knew about the abusive relationship and felt guilty. Even relatives felt guilty, that I had gone to POWA shelter and not to them, but I didn't want to bother anybody anymore. I gave Makeba my *I Story* and after she finished reading it she said to me: That is why I divorced 5 times, because I couldn't stand it any longer.

Although Sweetness did not tell anyone of her *I Story* at the time of publication, she has now bought copies of the book to give to friends and relatives, including her children.

> The thing with abuse is that you get used to it and think everything is right. Even when others criticised my husband, I would still defend him and say he is like this, you will get used to him. I saw nothing wrong. Later he isolated me from my friends and family and locked me and the children in the house. My house became a prison. I want my friends and family to read my story and explanation.
>
> When I distribute the *"I" Stories* book to them, it is not necessarily about my story, because all stories are effective. I am empowering my daughter and other women not to repeat my mistakes. When you are with your spouse and you read these stories you will be able to pinpoint some mistakes to your spouse. It is vital that your spouse must know your likes and dislikes. You mustn't compromise. A yes must be a yes and no must be a no. That is another thing that kills us women, we keep on compromising. When they read these stories, women will be empowered.
>
> When I read other stories, I compare them and think my story wasn't as worse as theirs. I cried reading the other stories, they are too brutal, and thought I would not have allowed that to happen to me. But I realise if others read mine they might say the same. I keep on reading them, they never bore me.

### Role models

Martha Seloane, who stayed in an abusive relationship for more then 10 years, participated in the *"I" Stories* project in 2004. Seloane says that, "If you are in an abusive relationship you are not always aware of it, until you wake up and realise this is not a normal situation anymore." In 2004, Seloane filed a case against her husband in the Protea court. It was there that she got in contact with Nisaa, which had an office in the Protea court, and who offered her and her children a place to stay in their shelter.

Seloane decided to use her own name for her story. "I had no problem with that, because other women in my situation often don't know how they can help themselves. As long as they don't talk about it, they stay in the relationship for long, like I did, because they are not aware of it. Only at Nisaa I started thinking about my situation, while talking to the social workers. Since then I am no longer a victim, but survivor. I am strong now and I know that I will never let anyone abuse me that way again. I also believe it is much better for my children that I left. I know they have seen the book and saw me on TV, but we never really talked about it." At the time she was in the abusive relationship, Seloane was not working and fully dependent on her husband. Now she is divorced and works as a senior personal officer at the Department of Justice.

Telling their story openly is not only empowering to the women themselves, but can have an impact on other women in their community. After Seloane's *I Story* was published, during the 16 Days of Activism, she appeared on radio and two television shows. When friends and colleagues told her they had seen her on TV, she would initially joke, saying "that wasn't me, but my sister." Soon women from her community would come to her house for help. Seloane recalls, "They explained about their abusive relationships, and that they didn't know where to go for help. They also wanted to leave and tell their story on radio or television, but didn't know how to approach this. I would refer them to Gender Links or Nisaa. Therefore I believe the *"I" Stories* are powerful, because they open up the eyes of women, who before not always realised they were in an abusive relationship or did not know where to get help."



MARKING 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

NONO TINTELA

# Scarred by a childhood fantasy

HE WAS perfect, he was my hero, my superstar, my everything. Whenever he was around, I felt safer; I felt loved. I thought nothing or no one could hurt me as long as my daddy was around. He loved me very much. I was his princess.

If anyone hit me, I would just keep quiet until he came home, and then I would start crying. He would throw dangerous things at the person who hit me. At the time, I didn't know that my father was abusive. I thought he was just protecting me.

When I was 8 years old, we were playing house with my friends when an older man (a friend of my brothers) raped me. He told me not to cry or make a noise. At the time I did not know what was happening to me. I felt so afraid and guilty.

When I took a bath that night, my mother noticed the blood on my panties. She asked me to open my legs and checked me, but then said nothing.

I have lived with this terrible guilt all my life. I have tried to block it out but when the same thing happened to my daughter several years later, it all started to come back. When I see this man, who is now a politician, I feel very angry. I have not yet had the courage to confront him, but when I do, the question I want to ask him is: why?

As a child, it was only when my mother ended up unconscious in the hospital that I started questioning my father's love for me. Then he started being abusive towards me. I cried every day wondering what happened to my loving, caring, protective father. What happened to my hero?

**Hate**

When they sent me to boarding school, I started to wonder if my parents still loved me. No one was there to protect me from the bullies at boarding school. I started to feel alone and longed for my father's protectiveness. I went home for holidays. I could hardly recognise the man I found: an angry and abusive man; hardly the man I loved and worshipped as my father.

I didn't know this man any more. I wanted my father back. I so wanted the school holidays to be over because I could not stay in that house any more.

My younger sister would sit in the corner and cry when my older brother and I called the police. When the police left, my father started beating and swearing at us. I wanted my father back. I wanted my hero back because there was no one to protect me from this monster.

My older brother told my mother that if she did not move out of the house, he would kill my father. I was devastated because I loved my father so much. My mother moved out with me and my younger sister.

When they divorced, I fell apart. I hated my father so much that when he died, I did not go to his funeral.

I grew up hating men. I would have a boyfriend for a short while then I would just break up with him.

One of the relationships I had was with a man who made me pregnant during my final year of matric. I wrote my exams while I was pregnant. When I gave birth to my first daughter the man denied being the father, saying that I had had so many relationships he could not be sure that the child belonged to him.

My mother raised my daughter. I could not bring myself to touch her; even when she was a baby, because of the anger that I felt towards her father. I kept remembering my father. I have this anger towards all men.

I last saw my first daughter at the age of 5. I have not been able to see her again because I am scared of how she will react. I don't know what she knows about me or how she feels. I am scared of being rejected.

I met my husband about 10 years after I had my first child. At the time he did not know about the child. He was so sweet and loving, he reminded me of my father.

At first, I thought he was protective of me because he loved me just like my dad. I did not see the signs. I think I missed my father so much that I did not notice the signs. It was as though my hero had come back to life again. He told me that he loved me just as my father did. I needed to hear that. I always felt safe in his arms and inside me; I felt my father's love. Then he started beating me and all the anger inside me started to surface. My daughter was 8 months old when the abuse started.

The police would come to my house and tell us to solve our problems. Then they would leave me at the house for him to finish me off.

The three court interdicts against my husband did not help. He simply ignored them and the police seemed powerless to act. Ironically it was me and my daughter who ended up in the police cells. I have never been arrested, but I have slept in police cells more times than I can count so that my daughter and I would be safe.

My daughter was raped when she was 6 years old and my husband blamed me for it. I was so devastated I wanted to die. He used to tell my daughter that she was stupid and that was why they raped her. Whenever he said those words, I felt a sharp pain piercing my heart. I thought of all the pain my father caused me and my mom.

**Anger**

I left my husband, stayed at People Against Women Abuse (Powa) for a month and then decided to return to my husband. As a born-again Christian, I believed that God had changed him. But when he started abusing us again, I remembered what my mother told me: "You can scrub a leopard of his spots, but he will remain a leopard."

Soon after, I found out that I was HIV-positive. I was so angry. I am so angry that I do not know what to deal with this anger.

I am angry at our justice system for not protecting women and children. I am angry at our courts for releasing these monsters back to our homes. I am angry at the man who raped me as a child and now walks the streets as a respected politician. I am angry at the man who made me pregnant and then walked away, leaving me so angry towards my first daughter (now 20 years old) with whom I have never bonded.

I am angry at those men who treat us like doormats. I am angry at my father for not protecting me. Worst of all I am angry at myself for not protecting my second daughter when the very same thing happened to her.

If I could be the president for just one day, I would bring back the death sentence for all the men who abuse women and children. I am angry, but I will turn my anger into being a survivor, because God made me a survivor. This is how I must direct my energy.

*This story is part of the I Stories series produced by the Gender Links Opinion and Commentary Service for the Sixteen Days of Activism on Gender Violence.*

NONO Tintela is an angry survivor; she was raped as a child and is HIV positive. Her second daughter was also raped

Nono Tintela's story appeared in the *Sunday Tribune*, South Africa, 26 November 2006.

### Media coverage and reaction

The fact that most of the women who approached Seloane had not read the book, but came to her house because they had seen her on television, proves the importance of the media in publishing the *"I" Stories*. Nicole Johnston, editor of the *Mail and Guardian*, believes the *"I" Stories* work for journalists because "they are about real people." Johnston recalls, "In 2006 we published the two

stories of the lesbian women. I believed they were really good and interesting. Too often NGO's want to write about policy, while readers are interested in real stories. The trick is to write about policies, by mixing it into a real personal story."

Journalist Sandy McCowen of SABC News, started covering gender violence in 2003, and often used the *"I" Stories* as a guideline.

> *"Writing the story was like a gift to me, because I knew people are going to read my story. I didn't do it anonymously because I wanted people to see me, to relate to me, for my community to see how tall and proud I am walking even though I wrote about my abuse and to see that even though it happens you will heal and can start all over again and be something in your life."*
> - Maleshoane Motsiri

According to Mc Cousen,

> The *"I" Stories* were awesome. I used them as a guideline and then did my own follow up. I asked GL to approach some of the participants to ask if they wanted to do an interview with me. One woman was HIV positive but hadn't told anyone at work. She decided on World Aids Day to tell all her colleagues in the entire company. She allowed us to film it and it became an absolutely amazing story. We filmed people's reaction to her explanation, how she handled it afterwards and how people were so shocked at first and then started supporting her. It started with her *I story*, but we took it further and since then we did three follow ups with her. Another great story was about a man who had raped and who was repenting what he had done. In the *"I" Stories* book it was mostly about him and what he had done, but I interviewed him about how he had changed through rehabilitation and how he was trying to change men's minds and how men get involved in ending gender violence. My boss used to think I had the most awesome ideas, but in the meantime half of them came from the *"I" Stories*. It was absolutely brilliant. I have won 6 awards in total, all were for my coverage on gender based violence.



Sandy McCowen accepting 2006 Gender and Media Summit award.
*Credit: Colleen Lowe Morna*

Just like Seloane, who received visits from women in her community seeking help after she had appeared on television, McCowen's news items also lead to reactions from the public. According to McCowen, "I have had many women phone me at SABC over the years asking for help. After listening to their story I would refer them to the right NGO's."

Susan Smuts, Deputy Managing Editor of the *Sunday Times*, also said, "The *"I" Stories* are amazing. The feedback I have received has been very positive. People recognise themselves and their family members and friends in the stories because they are about human beings. They make us see what the real impact of domestic violence is, in ways that statistics and analysis cannot do (not that there is not room for those types of stories too)."

**Readers and listeners respond**

Maleshoane Motsiri's *I Story* of her abusive relationship was published in 2006. After first being a victim and later a survivor of abuse, she now works as a councillor at POWA. Although it wasn't her participation in the *"I" Stories* that empowered her, as she had already left her husband and job to start over, writing and publishing her story made her more open-minded and understanding towards others. According to Motsiri, "After reading my own story I cried, especially after reading my own advice. I learned

not to judge, to blame or to criticise other people's choices, beliefs, and decisions. I also had my beliefs that led me to the choices I made. Every time a client is telling me something, I explore options with them on advantages and disadvantages of staying. At the end of the day, it is their decision to make. And whether they choose to



Meleshoane Motsiri *Credit: Colleen Lowe Morna*

After the publication of her *I Story*, Motsiri gave a radio interview, after which listeners could phone in and ask questions. Motsiri recalls, "One man asked me why I had stayed in the relationship for so long. I didn't feel offended at all and explained how difficult it was to leave and that everyday I searched for a reason to stay, also for my children. He was sorry for me and was compassionate. Another man phoned in and said it was good we talked about it, because men also get a chance to learn and understand how abuse affects women. Other practical questions came from women, asking me how long I was in the relationship, how I got out etc."

Gender Links also occasionally receives requests from people or other NGO's who want to buy the *"I" Stories* book for a resource or redistribution. For instance, Maureen Shabonga, from Khaya Lethemba shelter in Braamfontein, bought twenty copies to give to staff and clients at the shelter, after a woman in her shelter who participated in the *"I" Stories* in 2007 had shown her the book.

According to Shabonga,

> Everybody who read it was amazed, surprised even shocked that this is all happening. The book is informative as well as powerful. Most of my clients don't know anything about the court procedures when they open a domestic violence case. They are often not informed about something like a protection order and end up going back to their husbands. A project like the *"I" Stories* can help my clients as they can learn from procedures other women went through. They also realise they are not the only one in what they are experiencing. Some clients say it is better to live in the streets than in this shelter. Maybe the staff doesn't always understand their clients and what they have been through or it is a lack of respect for human beings. Whomever reads the *"I" Stories* realises the severity of abuse and it will have the impact that we are more likely to act now to stop it. For this we need to involve men. Not all men are abusers. I believe it can help if men read the *"I" Stories.*

The power of the *"I" Stories* to evoke responses from people that are so much stronger than typical reportage is apparent. During 16 Days of Activism 2007, *Media 24* website in South Africa created a special section that highlighted the GL *"I" Stories*. The website has a function that allows readers to comment on what they read. One story which particularly captured attention was "I can not leave my abusive husband." Readers wrote to the website posting their comments about their own experiences of abuse, how they left abusive situations, and their frustrations at a society that continues to allow this to happen. Following are just a few examples of readers' responses:

> I have been there and at the age of 40 told him to go as I did not need the verbal as well as the physical abuse. There are jobs out there and people are willing



Puni Matsibi's story was one of those featured on the Women 24 website during 16 Days 2007

I've also gone through this kind of abuse, 5 broken noses, a fractured cheek bone, a fractured scull, 56 stitches on my head after being hit with a hammer, 30 stitches in my fingers after blocking a jab from a sword that was meant for my stomach. I know all about it, it's hard to leave an abusive relationship. Honestly speaking, I didn't leave him, the Lord intervened in His Devine way and my husband got sentenced to 134 years imprisonment for shooting 6 people of which 4 died in a bar fight. I've been abuse free for four years now after 8 years of hell. My message to abused women? Speak to a professional about your situation because if you are staying in such an abusive relationship it means that you cant think rational about it all anymore - you might be too damaged emotionally. There is help out there, it's up to you to accept it.

You have nothing to fear but fear itself. his anger at you is a result of his being insecure and a coward. he cant take his frustration out on anyone else so he is using you. leave him and when he tries to woo you back with empty promises be wary of him and finally have faith in the almighty and hope for the best. you have to take the first step. my prayers and tears are with you.

Overall, it is evident that there is a place for the real stories of gender violence to be heard. For the women telling their stories, their courage is a very big step towards their own healing, and in creating a culture that says, "no more violence."

**Writer Bio**
Mariette van Dijk works as an intern with Gender Link as assistant Gender Justice Programme Manager and Researcher. She holds a Bachelor of Journalism (School of Journalism, Utrecht) and Masters International Development at the ISHSS (International School for Human Social Sciences) University of Amsterdam



## Popular Media Aims to Combat Human Trafficking

By Tonya Graham

**Abstract**

Human trafficking is an emerging rights and security issue in Southern Africa. As a result of the sensitive and often hidden nature of the problem, media strategies and campaigns must be developed with careful messaging and understanding of not only the problem itself, but also related migration issues. Produced by CMFD (Community Media for Development) Productions, the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Southern African Counter-Trafficking Assistance Programme (SACTAP) initiated two popular media projects – one live theatre and one radio drama - that work to address issues of human trafficking and migration in both source, transit and destination countries.

**Key words**

human trafficking, rights, migration

### Human Trafficking in Southern Africa

In the wake of ongoing preparations for the 2010 FIFA World Cup and the inevitable influx of tourists, Southern African human rights organisations as well as governments are gearing up, concerned that the increased economic activity could lead to bigger business for human traffickers.

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) is one such organisation, and its Southern African Counter-Trafficking Assistance Programme (SACTAP), which commenced in 2003, is a key player in Southern Africa's efforts to tackle and respond to human trafficking. Active across the Southern African region, SACTAP aims to support and develop the capacity of governments and civil society groups to deal with the problem of trafficking in Southern Africa while also offering assistance to victims and raising awareness among the general public.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), human trafficking is the third most lucrative illegal industry in the world, falling only slightly behind weapons and drug trafficking. However, because of its clandestine nature, many people are unaware of how it happens and easily fall victim to traffickers, who make appealing offers that are difficult to refuse. With it porous borders, high rates of poverty, and pervasive gender inequalities, Southern Africa is ripe ground for human trafficking. Compounding the situation is the fact that people are often trafficked by someone known to them – a friend or neighbour, even a family member.

*The United Nations (UN) Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children defines human trafficking as, "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, or abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments of benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation."*

The United Nations (UN) Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons was adopted in 2000, and resulted in new or bolstered anti-trafficking laws in many countries, laws intended to support victims of trafficking and arrest and prosecute traffickers. Unfortunately, despite new laws and protocols globally, access to justice is still far out of reach for the majority of trafficked people. In Southern Africa, many countries have been slow to react to the problem, and if legislation exists at all, it is inadequate or poorly implemented. Many countries in the region however are beginning to address the issue. Mozambique, for example, is a major source country for trafficking to South Africa – the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that at least 1,000 Mozambicans are trafficked each year - and has recently approved a proposed anti-trafficking bill (Madzima 2008). In South Africa, the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) will be spearheading a European Commission funded Anti-Trafficking Action Plan over the next 18 months as the country prepares to host the FIFA World Cup in 2010.

Lack of awareness remains an obstacle in the fight against human trafficking. For many organisations like the IOM that are working to end human trafficking, this means arming people who may want to migrate with as much information about trafficking as they can, in the hope that they will be better able to recognise false offers and migrate more safely, thereby decreasing the number of people who are trafficked each year.

This is not as straightforward a task as it may seem, as trafficking does not only affect a certain sector of the population. While education and income level play a significant role in who is ultimately at a higher risk, it is too simplistic to say that rural, economically poor people with little formal education comprise the only risk group. The desire to have a better life, access more opportunities than are available at home, or to escape conflict are the main factors that drive people to migrate, and can affect anyone.




Another challenge is reaching people who have already been trafficked, as they are generally kept hidden from the public, isolated from other people in the community. They may not speak the language of the country they are in or may be reluctant to come forward, fearing further harassment from officials or deportation, (as well as retribution from their traffickers against themselves or their families).

There is also a great deal of stigma attached to trafficked people, especially women and children who end up in the sex industry, because of the work traffickers force them to do.

Because of this, the communication strategies that organisations use need to be diverse and appeal to a wide range of people. They also need to be sensitive to the situations in which trafficked people are living. In this context, how an organisation develops and puts

forth messaging is a key challenge to overcome. The project plan must keep communication for social change principles in mind. Key messages must be identified through consultation with community members and experts in the field. Other related issues, such as xenophobia, root causes of migration, customary and religious considerations, etc., need to be considered and appropriately incorporated into the messaging. In addition, the communication method must be as important as the messages themselves. If the messages are good but the medium is inappropriate for the audience, the project will not be effective.

For these reasons, IOM often looks to popular media like theatre and radio drama to reach their audiences in Southern Africa.

**Drama to combat trafficking**

Using radio drama and theatre for social change can be very effective, as messaging can be creatively woven into a strong, exciting story. Audiences engage with the issues through their emotional involvement in the story and the characters. By identifying with the characters and traveling alongside them as they face conflicts and make decisions, audiences are also forced to face those conflicts, and live through those decisions.

This idea comes from the social learning theory developed by Albert Bandura. This theory suggests that people learn by first observing other people's behaviour and the consequences they experience because of it, rehearsing what would happen if they followed that behaviour, trying it out and comparing their experience with other people's, and finally confirming their belief in the new behaviour (Fossard 1996).

Communication strategies using drama also draw on participatory theatre and popular education models developed by Augusto Boal and Paulo Freire. By giving people the opportunity to consider behaviours or actions via fictional characters, it allows them to rehearse the behaviour or action in a safe, non-threatening environment giving them the confidence to enact that behaviour or action in the real world. In Boal's participatory theatre model, audiences literally become "spectactors," first watching, then acting out possible solutions for a common problem, or dealing with difficult situations by trying new behaviours (Boal 1979).

**IOM's Counter-Trafficking Information and Awareness Raising Campaign in Southern Africa**

IOM's Southern African Counter-Trafficking Assistance Programme (SACTAP) has been running multi-media campaigns across Southern Africa that seeks to inform people about human trafficking, prevent vulnerable people from falling victim to traffickers, encourage people who have been trafficked to seek help, and to advertise its toll free hotline numbers.

The campaigns use print, film and television, radio, theatre and media coverage to reach audiences across all sectors of the population. Since the campaign started, the IOM has produced posters, flyers, stickers and billboards that have been posted anywhere from border posts to inner city streets. They have run both television and radio adverts in local languages, and have produced a documentary detailing South African trafficking trends.

*Khuluma Afrika!*, a participatory community theatre production, and *Dealers/ Troco,* a 13-part serial radio drama in English and Portuguese, produced by CMFD (Community Media for Development) Productions, are part of these campaigns. These projects were made possible with the generous funding of the Norwegian Embassy in South Africa, the US Department of State's Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration, and South Africa's Department of Foreign Affairs.

Though theatre and radio drama have very different reaches and advantages, they both have great mass appeal, especially in the African context. One of the advantages to radio is that it can reach a large number of people at once, whereas theatre must generally cater to a smaller audience. However, because of the intimate audiences, there is more opportunity for interaction and direct dialogue about an issue. More importantly, both media rely on oral storytelling, thereby bypassing the need for basic literacy, allowing a message to be passed on in a much more creative way. Storytelling has strong roots in most African cultures, making radio drama and theatre very palatable media.

IOM's Southern African Counter-Trafficking Assistance Programme (SACTAP) recently initiated two popular media projects that work to address issues of human trafficking and migration in both source, transit and destination countries, using the creative media expertise of CMFD to implement the projects.

**Khuluma Afrika!**

*Khuluma Afrika!* was a dynamic community theatre production workshopped and performed by a local youth group, Alertas da Vida, The show was created for IOM by CMFD to conduct outreach around human trafficking and related issues among the Mozambican community in South Africa, particularly in mining communities.

Performed in Portuguese, with some Shangaan, Zulu and English dialogue, the performance aimed to raise awareness of human trafficking, make people aware of the IOM hotline number, and encourage people who may have been trafficked or potential whistleblowers to seek help.

Workshopped over a two-month period by the Alertas group, *Khuluma Afrika!* told the story of two sisters, drawn to South Africa by false promises of a better life. Separated, desperate and exploited, the sisters seek solace in letters to one another that express their hardships, hopes and dreams of home.

The aim of participatory theatre is to give individuals and communities the opportunity to talk about and act out issues that affect them, working on the assumption that because they are from the community affected, they are best equipped to speak on the issue. It also ensures greater engagement from audiences, as they are much more likely to relate to and identify with the characters and the story, and understand the messages as coming from their own people and not from an outside influence. This idea is especially important in countries like South Africa and Mozambique, where initiatives that appear neo-imperialist or driven by outsiders are highly resented.

Participatory theatre also allows the participants or cast members to think critically about issues in their communities and gain new insights, and can create a sense of ownership of the problem, encouraging participants to take on the issue in their communities.

Participatory theatre was chosen for the *Khuluma Afrika!* project for several reasons. By having the cast members involved in the production from script development through to performance, it allowed them to gain a solid



Community performance of Khuluma Afrika! at Blyvoor Informal Settlement. *Credit: Tonya Graham*

grasp of the issues they were dealing with and the reality behind the story they were telling.

Culture was also a factor in the decision to use theatre. Mozambican culture has a strong emphasis on oral communication and storytelling, so theatre seemed an obvious strategy. Even the cast members, although some were not trained actors, took easily to the medium, seemed to have a solid sense of how to tell a story, and often knew when and how to emphasise or play things up for audiences to increase their enjoyment of the show.

This also ties into the way in which the messages were put across in the drama. By carefully weaving messaging into a story with well developed characters and conflicts, *Khuluma Afrika!* avoided the pitfall of becoming overly didactic. The show was able to capture audiences' attention and keep them engaged, even in busy areas such as street corners and markets, because the story was interesting, and the drama was entertaining and well acted. The entertainment value increased audiences' understanding of the messages in the play. Because audiences were emotionally engaged, many people paid closer attention during the production, and participated more in post-performance discussions, asking questions and thoughtfully filling out evaluations.

Another advantage of theatre is that it is largely a non-threatening medium. This means that the show was able to go into places where perhaps even traffickers could be present, and this was not seen as a threat. As well, it allows people to reflect on sensitive issues, such as violence against women, through the characters. While discussing the characters, people actually reflect on their own lives.

Using theatre allowed IOM and CMFD to produce a highly effective, informative, and entertaining production that combined careful messaging with quality entertainment.

The messaging for *Khuluma Afrika!* was developed through a process that included both research and consultation with key stakeholders and community members. The first step was to determine the target audience. It was decided that this would be:

- people who have been or know people who have been tricked/ misled into a trafficking situation;
- Mozambican miners' wives/ domestic workers;
- people/ service providers in mining/ migrant communities – churches, shops, hairdressers;
- miners;
- urban brothels/ sex workers;
- people involved in transport; and
- potential victims and people who can raise awareness among potential victims.



Sifiso Simelane and Rogerio Simango, performance at Elsburg Hostel, PlaserDome. *Credit: Deborah Walter*

The next step was strategising how to reach this target group – where should the production be performed? What kinds of spaces are these groups likely to be? It was determined that the production would need to be brought into places including:

- churches;
- clinics;
- transport ranks;
- mining hostels;
- night clubs; and
- public spaces in Johannesburg CBD and mining communities.

Other key considerations for the messaging in *Khuluma Afrika!* included the following:

- The play must have a strong male character, a role model that men could emulate and identify with.
- The messages must be developed within a context of migration, i.e. trafficking included as part of exploring migration in general.
- Edutainment – the production must be lively, entertaining, and reach people on an emotional level – this is the rationale for using drama, comedy, music, and dance together.
- HIV/AIDS in the context of trafficking should be included, yet careful care given to ensuring the production is not too laden with messages, and that good HIV communication is practiced.
- The message is to promote the IOM's work and hotline, without insinuating it is a means to return home free.

*"I think we were able to help them and teach them about other related issues, I like that because they told us how much we helped them."*
- Actor

*"I learned that before you take a decision of traveling from one place to another with promises, be careful. Find out first, don't just go without knowing how life is going to be."*
- Audience member, inner-city drop in centre

*"No matter where you come from we still all the same. Discrimination isn't the way."*
- Audience member, inner-city bar

The main drama was accompanied by comedy skits, also created by the Alertas group, that talk about life in the mines, being away from home, migration and discrimination. The show, which toured mine hostels, an informal settlement, public spaces like parks, clinics, churches and street corners in 2006-2007, incorporated drama, music and dance. Because it had few technical or set requirements, it had the unique ability to be performed anywhere.

Where appropriate, actors led a post-performance discussion and evaluation, where audiences could make comments, ask questions and get more information.

Feedback from the production was overwhelmingly positive. One audience member at a drop-in centre for sex workers in inner city Johannesburg remarked that the show reflected her own experience of coming to the city from a rural area, saying that someone told her they were arranging a job for her. When she arrived, they brought her to a brothel and forced her into sex work.

An interesting spin-off in the project messaging was that people from various audiences took an anti-discrimination message from the play. In post-performance discussions and written evaluations, many people gave comments like, "no matter where you come from we [are] still the same", and "we should help each other as Africans." Without expressly intending to do so, the production engendered a pan-African sense of caring together for each other. This strengthened the overall message of the play, and though it was originally targeted for the Mozambican community, the additional message gave a heightened relevance for non-Mozambican audiences.

In addition to the theatre production, CMFD received a grant by the Global Fund for Women to add a musical component to the project. CMFD worked with local musicians to develop music to deliver messages about gender-based violence, human trafficking and migration. Like the play, it was also developed with a particular

focus on production value, on creating music that people listen to because it's good, not because it has a message. The music was incorporated into *Khuluma Afrika!*, and has been distributed to radio stations and organisations across Southern Africa.

**Dealers/ Troco**

This serial radio drama, set to air in 2008, aims to help people in Zambia and Mozambique, both key source and transit countries, understand what human trafficking is, how it happens, and how to protect themselves if they want to migrate. The 13-part drama weaves trafficking and migration issues into an action-packed storyline, creating a series that is as entertaining as it is informative.

> *"[The mafia part] gets you interested in the story, then when these other things [like trafficking, HIV, sexual abuse] come in, it's still interesting, it's not like you're just putting out facts. Like on the news or something – people can ignore those things because they're tired of hearing them. But put in this way it can make you think about it twice."*
> - Zambian focus group participant

Titled *Dealers* in Zambia and *Troco* in Mozambique, the story follows a family of women traders who inadvertently are caught up in a mafia scandal and an underground human trafficking ring. Through their experiences, and the experiences of their neighbours and friends, listeners are encouraged to ask questions about a range of issues related to trafficking and migration.

There are a wide range of benefits to using radio. It is low cost to produce relative to other mass media like television or film. Since it does not rely on literacy, a wide range of the population can access it. It allows for localisation of the issue, since information about local organisations, interviews with local individuals, etc can follow the drama. Also, community radio in itself is largely participatory, and this can help draw listening communities into the issue. In rural areas especially, listening to the radio is often a family, group or community activity, and radio can make use of these existing listening groups to spark discussion and debate.



Anastâcia da Glória Daúde Nhaca (Sofia) and Justina Oalmira Tihos Sigulha (Esperanca) recording Troco in Mozambique
*Credit: Gabriel Fossatti-Bellani*

The Scan ICT report produced by UNECA states that "Mozambique has a number of radio stations, the most important ones being Rádio Moçambique (RM), Rádio Miramar, RTK, Rádio Terra Verde, RTPAfrica (Portuguese Radio). There are also community radios, which play an important role in the remote areas in the context of information, education, culture, health and civic campaigns. The radio network covers approximately 60-70% of the population throughout the country… However, the global coverage of the national TV broadcasting serves only 15 to 17% of the population" (as of 2001). In addition, UNICEF Mozambique estimates that literacy rates are about 67% for men and 38% for women. Since women are primary targets for the human trafficking message, it is important that coverage is accessible to them. Given access to the various media, concentrating on radio is the strongest media for improving information.

In preparation for the development of *Dealers/ Troco*, formative research was conducted that included interviews with 100 migrant people living in Johannesburg. This research was used to bring out sub-themes like xenophobia, harassment and corruption by police and

immigration officials, as well as touch on the root causes of migration. Having first-hand interviews was integral to keeping the story rooted in real experience. The scriptwriters could trust that what they were writing would reflect real situations as they had the stories and experiences of migrant people as a base to work from.

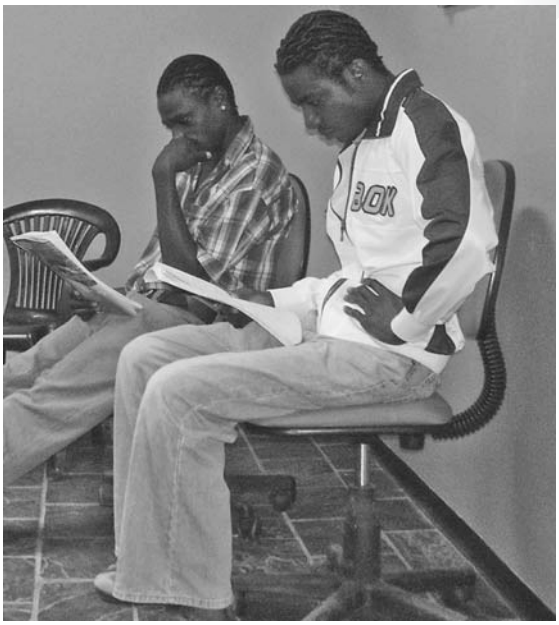
The drama was workshopped in English with a team of scriptwriters, and later adapted and translated into Portuguese for Mozambique. Both the initial story outline and the completed scripts were sent to various stakeholders in Zambia, Mozambique and South Africa for feedback to ensure that the story and characters were applicable to both Zambia and Mozambique.

*"[The drama] will teach [people] a lot. There are a lot of people who want to leave. They leave with these big plans that don't ever happen. This will teach them to be more careful."*
- Zambian focus group participant

*"The script sounds like what happens on a daily basis."*
- Mozambican focus group participant

*"I realise now that anyone can betray you, to be cautious who I trust and also to exercise caution when given a good looking job offer away from my country."*
- Zambian voice actor

Careful adaptation was an important part of the development of *Troco*. It is relatively inexpensive to adapt a storyline to another country, thereby increasing the reach of the project without a great deal of additional expense. Producing an adapted drama is also a quicker process since most of the sound effects will be the same, with only a few changes or additions to localise the settings. However, key considerations had to be made to ensure the adaptation of *Troco* was successful. CMFD needed to ensure the language was accurate, both in terms of translation as well as specific words and phrases,



Fred Mbasela and Hendrix Chomba reviewing the draft Zambia scripts
*Credit: Cindy Dzanya*

local proverbs and references. The translator needed to have a thorough understanding of both languages s so that English idiomatic expressions were not directly translated into a Portuguese phrase that made no sense. The adaptation needed to consider cultural differences and changes to certain details were made accordingly. For example, Zambia is a transit country for trafficking from the Congo to South Africa, so in *Dealers*, one of the lead characters unknowingly assists in the trafficking of Congolese girl. Mozambique is not a transit country for Congolese, so for *Troco* this was changed to a girl being trafficked from a remote part of Mozambique through Maputo to South Africa.

CMFD held focus groups in Zambia and Mozambique before recording began to make sure the drama was appealing, exciting, and that the characters and situations reflected reality. Feedback from the focus groups was overwhelmingly positive, with participants saying that they enjoyed the story, and that it reminded them that even though you think it won't happen to you, trafficking is real.

During the recording, the response from the actors involved was much the same. Interestingly, one of the actors in Zambia had recently been offered a lucrative-

sounding job in Canada, and was considering taking it. After recording the drama, and discussing the job offer with other people on the team, she decided the offer was not worth the potential risk, and turned it down.

Though it is too early to make a definite judgment, this may be an indication of the effectiveness of this story, and of radio drama in general, to talk about human trafficking in a way that encourages people to really think about the issues.

Accompanying the drama is a media guide that will give radio presenters or community organisations the information they need to initiate discussion about the characters and the issues they face. Radio stations will be encouraged to have live phone-in discussions after each episode, and there is a possibility of setting up a text-message line where listeners can text their comments, as well as a blog for the drama in both English and Portuguese.

The series will air in English on radio stations across Zambia, and the adapted Portuguese version will air in Mozambique.

Currently, there is very little popular discourse around human trafficking – IOM being one of the only organisations in the region that has run extensive information and awaneress raising campaigns. However, with initiatives like IOM's *Khuluma Afrika!* and *Dealers/Troco* creating more popular awareness of human trafficking and related human rights issues, governments will be encouraged to extend these efforts; and with the World Cup just around the corner, action cannot come soon enough.

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**Writers Bio**
Tonya Graham is a projects coordinator working with CMFD (Community Media for Development) Productions, currently working on media and drama to address human rights and health issues.



# Media Activism: Opportunities for Rural Women

By Saeanna Chingamuka

**Abstract**

The article will explore the issue of media activism and how voices of rural women have been largely sidelined in advocacy work using the media. Using the media, women can air their concerns and at the same time contribute to their development and that of society as a whole. Because the media is an important tool that can empower women, it is imperative that rural women have access to the media and desist from being passive recipients of views constructed by other people, to active recipients who can react and fight for fair and accurate reporting. Rural women can be empowered so that they can respond thoughtfully and factually to opposing viewpoints. Further, I want to suggest that rural women be considered powerful news sources that can steer public debate on important public issues. Media networks and organisations can play the role of empowering women to approach media coverage on issues that affect them with a vigilant and critical eye. At the same time, journalists should take news to rural women and seek their opinion and comment, which can assist in effecting change.

**Key words**

media activism, rural women, women's empowerment

## Introduction

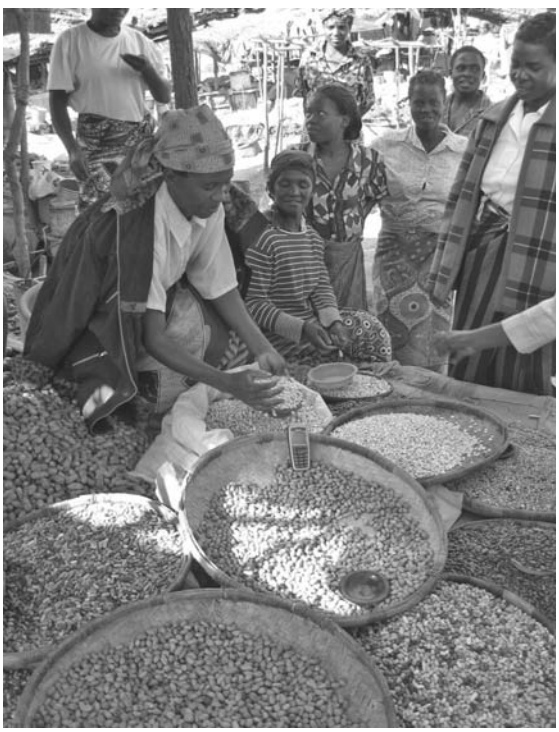
The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report of 2001 noted that "development, as often stated, is about expanding choices people have to lead lives they value and fundamental to enlarging choices is building human capabilities –both of men and women across the social and economic spectrum of a society" (Balakrishnan 2002). This assertion acknowledges the importance of recognising the value that women can add to the development of their countries. As such, it is important to expand the knowledge among rural women in particular, enhancing their abilities to negotiate for their

resource share and participate in the public sphere to effect social transformation.

One way in which rural women's capabilities can be fully used to their development is media activism. In this article, media activism means activism that uses different forms of media to produce and publish news for social movement. Such news is an attempt by different groups such as grassroots, community-based broadcasters and non-governmental organisations to give rural women voice in the media. Such voices are meant to be women's views in informing policy-makers about the issues that affect them. Media activism is also an alternative that is used to disseminate information that is not usually available in mainstream media. In light of this view, it is important at this point to define the current state of the media with regards to the voices of rural women.

**Where are rural women?**

The lens through which the media reports on women in Southern Africa shows a disparity on how news constructs rural women and their urban counterparts.



Women's access to media can lead to empowerment
*Credit: Trevor Davies*

The voices of rural women are often even less represented than their urban counterparts. The participation of women in the development of their countries, particularly rural women, will be difficult to realise if media continue to sideline their voices. Women have always had interesting perspectives on how development can be taken on board by different governments and therefore giving them a platform will go a long way in effecting positive societal change.

Through news worthiness and other selection criteria for material as well as the presentation of content, the media marginalise women and produce negative and stereotyped depictions, which belittle women's contributions to society. News and entertainment media cast women in a narrow range of roles, which treat them as sex objects and define women in terms of their relationship to men. As a result, women are depicted predominantly as entertainers or as victims. News on rural women is often about their plight and small income-generating projects that are supposedly seen as ways in which they can bail themselves out of poverty. Such coverage affects women negatively in that they cease to think big, which in turn affects their overall development in society.

Yet the media can largely be a medium that can provide a balanced picture of women's diverse lives and contributions to society in a changing world. The advances in information technology have facilitated the creation of a global village, which in turn has given women a number of opportunities to participate in the public sphere and contribute to public policy. However, the opportunities posed by new media are far from benefiting rural women due to lack of access and the capacity, among other things, to use those technologies.

**Regional concerns… where are rural women's voices?**

One of the steps to successful media activism and participation is that journalists should become analysts by looking at what kind of news is being covered for instance about rural women. It is also imperative to critically look at whose voices are included and excluded in policy campaigns and broader societal issues. In 2002,

the Media Institute for Southern Africa (MISA), in collaboration with its partner Gender Links, conducted the Gender and Media Baseline Study (GMBS) in 12 Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, publishing the results in March 2003. The report noted that despite women constituting 51% of the region's population, they only constitute 17% of news sources (MISA and Gender Links 2003).

At regional level, the Southern African Development Community's Gender Unit (SADC GU) at the SADC Secretariat in Botswana, established in 1997, remains committed to strengthening sub-regional commitment to ensuring effective inclusion of gender issues into the SADC Programme of Action and Community Building Initiative. In December 2005, the SADC GU convened a regional gender and development consultative conference at which a Gender-Based Regional Integration Plan: Strategic Implementation Framework (SIF) was developed to be implemented within a five-year period 2006-2010 (SARDC & SADC 2006). The major concerns in the region on the media are on representation and portrayal of women in editorial content. Thus, the SIF has called on SADC states to ensure 30% women news sources by 2010 and gender balance in news sources by 2015 and this can be a great opportunity for rural women.

The challenge is on governments and states to move from promises to delivery by ensuring that implementation structures are in place to ensure and effect change in the media industry. Journalists can make a difference by sourcing news from grassroots sources so as to include their voices and make sure that their interests are taken on board.

**What has been happening?**

Most people are aware of the success achieved by media in communicating vital subjects such as agriculture and public health; educating people about new practices; allowing the actors in rural development to express themselves in local languages; building social consciousness; and mobilising and accelerating change. Across Africa, community-oriented media is helping to empower rural women and other marginalised communities by facilitating access to media, as well as encouraging media to engage with issues affecting this often unheard community.

As part of a project with FAHAMU Networks for Social Justice, Community Media For Development/ CMFD Productions, an organisation which builds the capacity of communities, non-profit radio stations and media organisations to strengthen the use of media and communication for development, has been involved in empowering rural women in South Africa, Kenya and Sierra Leone. The idea behind this capacity-building process was to enable rural women to address their own social problems through media.

Working in close partnership with local women's organisations - Rural Women's Movement and Indiba-Africa in South Africa, FAHAMU Kenya in Kenya, and The Muloma Rural Women's Development Association in Sierra Leone – FAHAMU and CMFD hosted a series of training workshops. In each, women from rural communities "planned, researched, conducted interviews, wrote scripts and created a series of features covering a range of issues such as evictions of widows from their marital homes, women's inheritance rights and the impact of HIV/AIDS." (Walter 2008) Some of the issues receive little media attention, pointing to why media activism is important to communities and could be a major drive towards rural women's empowerment.



The women of Muloma Rural Women's Development Association in Sierra Leone learning how to use a voice recorder for interviews.
*Credit: Daniel Walter*

Another organisation that has been promoting programming through participatory communication is the Development Broadcasting Unit (DBU) based in Malawi. The aim of this initiative is to empower rural communities, in particular women, to be able to engage in productive national and local dialogue on and about development. On the other hand *Dzimwe* Community Radio with technical support from the Malawi Media Women's Association (MAMWA) aims to positively image women in news and at the same time to provide a network of women working in the media (Manyozo 2005). MAMWA builds the capacity of journalists to effectively participate in media activism by highlighting those issues that affect women and project these things in a way that empowers them. MAMWA has also managed to launch a rural-based and women-run community radio station in Nankumba. Such a participatory approach empowers women and imparts the knowledge that women can rescue themselves from inequalities.

The Federation of African Media Women in Southern African Development Community (FAMW-SADC) has made efforts to ensure democratisation of the media so that all sections of society, especially women and marginalised people, have access to and can participate in the media. One of the aims of this organisation is to ensure that the concerns of rural women are accommodated. As such, the FAMW Zimbabwe chapter goes out to the rural areas and gathers women in the community with pressing issues which they provide a platform of discussion. They record these discussions on a cassette and which are then "taken to a neighbouring community to listen to and respond to. Their responses are then taken back to the initial community with solutions offered. A report is compiled and sent to the relevant authorities in an attempt to alert them on the issues and possible solutions" (AMARC Zimbabwe country report). The organisation also takes journalists from the mainstream media to rural communities so that they can compile news about what is happening in such communities and include women as news sources in their coverage.

The World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC) Africa continues to promote broadcasting that is focused on such issues as poverty alleviation, conflict resolution, HIV/AIDS and gender empowerment. AMARC seeks to promote social change through the development of a strong community radio sector. The Women in Community Radio Network (WIN), one branch of AMARC which subscribes to the principles of the Beijing Platform of Action, aims to ensure that there is "full and equal integration of gender and empowerment of women in all community radio spheres" (AMARC Africa). The network has built the capacity of its members to analyse the role of women in media and to ensure that women's voices are captured in radio programmes. Women are also equipped with skills to challenge and change negative images of women in the media.

Promoting programming in local languages also enhances women's participation in media for development. The Zambian Community Radio Project has been working with established local Eastern Province radio stations and together they have produced and broadcast a radio series titled *In Our Village*. The series is broadcast in three local languages: Chewa, Chinyanja and Tumbuka. The themes that are broadcast include HIV/AIDS, income generation and education. The shows highlight community success stories and the aim is to encourage replication of successful activities in other villages. The programmes have been successful in that rural women have some sense of ownership of the programmes.

**Conclusion**

Media activism is a great opportunity for including the voices of rural women and it represents a significant manifestation of a women's public sphere. The activist role is essential for women's advancement and it is personally empowering. As noted in some of the best practices in the region, media activism is a means of accomplishing broader social and political goals such as educating women on policies that can make a difference in their lives. In addition, media activism has been aimed at correcting some traditional practices that disempower women, such as property inheritance, virginity testing and also persistent sex role stereotypes in media portrayals.

Women should be empowered by enhancing their skills to talk openly about the issues that affect them. They

should also be able to share concrete experiences of successes in addressing similar problems worldwide. On the other hand, it is imperative that NGO's whose activities are centred on women and the media build capacity of rural women to be able to respond to unfair media coverage, for instance by writing opinion pieces. There are no strict rules that govern the writing of these opinions and they are an effective way of contributing to overall development in society. The role that women play in development cannot be underestimated and the media has great potential to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women.

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**Writers Bio**

Saeanna Chingamuka is a researcher and writer in the area of gender and development. She is currently a final year and full time Master of Arts in Journalism and Media Studies student at Rhodes University. Before coming to Rhodes University she worked for the Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC), a regional NGO based in Harare, Zimbabwe as a Programme and Research Assistant in the organisations' gender department.



## Portrait of Domestic Violence in Botswana: A Case Study of The Voice And Botswana Guardian Newspapers

By Dr. Eno Akpabio and Patience Mathambo



**Abstract**

The overall objective of the study was to determine media representation of domestic violence in Botswana by paying particular attention to the coverage of the problem by a tabloid newspaper – *The Voice* vis a vis a mainstream newspaper – *Botswana Guardian*. The choice was informed by the fact that tabloids pay particular attention to human-interest stories whereas mainstream papers tend to focus more on hard news stories. The usual slant of tabloid coverage has been to titillate audiences and improve the bottom line. Mainstream papers, on the other hand, attempt to inform and educate the public and hence the study aimed to see whether these papers' coverage of this issue was consistent with the universal tabloid and mainstream newspaper tradition. Using content analysis, news stories of violence in households and relationships were examined over a five-year period – 2002-2006. The findings indicate that men were still the leading perpetrators of violence against women but other disturbing facts emerged in that children and women have also begun to exhibit the same abusive tendencies traditionally associated with men, amongst other manifestations of this malaise. It is clear that *The Voice's* human-interest brand of journalism covers a lot of ground with particular emphasis on the sensational. Moreover, for effect, bold, breathtaking headlines are employed with pictures to grab attention and make the editions a must read. However, the *Botswana Guardian* reports these crimes in a straightforward and informative manner, presumably to alert society to the crisis the nation faces. From the findings of this study, it is apparent that *The Voice* and *Botswana Guardian* newspapers went beyond the call of duty in tabloid and mainstream newspaper tradition in enlisting in the war against the scourge of domestic violence.

**Key words**

media, domestic violence, family, relationships

## Introduction

All over the world, it seems that the mainstream papers are at risk from the onslaught of the tabloids. Concerns about the prohibitive cost of publications seem to dissolve if the paper is able to hit the right cord with readers. People go out there and buy the paper. In addition, the mainstream papers are beginning to re-subscribe to the conventional wisdom (long known by the gatekeepers in tabloids) that to do well in the marketplace you must pander to public taste. This trend of trying to beat the tabloids at their game has elicited trenchant criticisms of the media in general. Many of such critics are at pains in trying to understand the road that the cherished profession of journalism is headed down. Sparks (2000) records two of such criticisms: abandonment of responsible journalism (MacNeil 1997) and allegations that the "mainstream press and the tabloids were moving closer together than ever before" (Ricchiardi 1998). As if this should be anathema.

There are arguments on both sides of the divide. Even if it appears that the media is able to actually represent the real world it cannot in reality do this as the selection of what to play up and what play down makes this impossible. This is because all such representations "represent" the social world in narrow and incomplete ways (Croteau and Hoynes 2003). Perry (1996) questions the whole basis of what is real, contending that:

> At the very least, however, human mental and sensory apparatuses limit knowledge of the 'real' world. In contextual terms… all knowledge comes from the transaction of the knower and the known. One can never know what qualities an event or object has, outside of perception. Thus, when examining the extent to which media content provides an unrepresentative picture of the world, one must recognise the very real limits on human abilities to describe an 'objective, external reality.'

In simple terms, this means that events are perceived differently because human beings do not walk around *tabula rasa*. They bring their own experiences, backgrounds and biases to bear on events that they encounter. Therefore, when called upon to relay what happened, everyone slants the report in many different directions. Journalists too are not immune. Reporters from various media houses treat a news event differently. Therefore, the concern should not be with the slant or emphasis but the social utility. So when the media plays up stories of domestic violence, for instance, does it serve to attract attention to the problem with a view to finding a solution or does it result in apathy and passive acceptance; a sort of "narcotising dysfunction"? (Severin and Tankard 1997) There can be no doubt that by setting such an agenda, and because it is a matter of growing concern in the Botswana society, the necessary awareness and publicity that should bring about a change would occur. This is because the agenda-setting hypothesis is played out fully when "a topic is both potentially interesting to an audience *and* receives the attention of the mass media" (Williams 1989).


Man accused of raping toddler kills himself
UNHOLY TRINITY
STORY By CHEDZA SIMON
RAPE VICTIM'S MOTHER:
JAURE'S GIRLFRIEND:
Domestic violence features prominently in the news, clipping from *The Voice*.

This much is borne out by an advert placed by the Botswana Police Crime Prevention Unit on this issue.[2] It had this headline: "Domestic Violence: it takes a few seconds for a quarrel to turn violent." It went on to list the fallouts: "jobs can be lost, careers can be stalled, families can be destroyed, many precious lives can be lost." It urges residents to "Reports such incidents to the Police. Call us toll free 0800600144."

*The Voice*, *Botswana Guardian* and other newspapers have inveighed against the phenomenon in their editorials based on its increasing occurrence. In one of its editorials, *The Voice* condemned the underreporting that has characterised this issue.[3]

In addition, the paper sincerely believes that by highlighting these issues it can help to bring about changes. It cites some examples:

> The newspaper has a long history of running various campaigns. We have been active in highlighting issues connected with the HIV/AIDS epidemic and have worked with people living with HIV/AIDS to give them a platform to talk about the issue… Another issue of note concerns a woman who was badly scarred when her former boyfriend burnt her alive. A kind reader raised money for her to have plastic surgery to reconstruct her face (The Voice 2005 company profile).

*The Voice* and the *Botswana Guardian* newspapers will have us believe that their choice of stories and the slant towards human interest reporting is intended to highlight and elicit changes and not an attempt to sell more and more of the papers. Perhaps an examination of the treatment of domestic violence issues may give us an inkling as to whether the editorial judgment of the two papers is altruistic o motivated by readers and sales. The rest of the paper will give a breakdown of the various incidences of domestic violence reported in *The Voice* and the *Botswana Guardian* newspapers as well as a discussion of the findings, but first the methodology used for the study.

**Table 1**
**Number of domestic violence stories in The Voice and Botswana Guardian newspapers**

| Year | No. & percentage of stories in The Voice | No. & percentage of stories in Botswana Guardian |
|---|---|---|
| 2002 | 38 (20%) | 26 (17.6%) |
| 2003 | 30 (15.8%) | 26 (17.6%) |
| 2004 | 31 (16.3%) | 23 (15.5%) |
| 2005 | 37 (19.5%) | 47 (31.7%) |
| 2006 | 54 (28.4%) | 26 (17.6%) |
| **Total** | **190 (100%)** | **148 (100%)** |

**Methodology**

To determine the nature of media reports on domestic violence in Botswana, copies of *The Voice* and the *Botswana Guardian* newspapers over a five – year period (2002- 2006) were studied. Only stories of violence occurring in households as well as violence in relationships were the concern of this study. *The Voice* and the *Botswana Guardian*, from which data for this study were gathered, are weekly tabloid and mainstream newspapers respectively circulating in Botswana. The researchers identified and categorised the stories.

**Findings**

*The Voice* newspaper reported more domestic violence stories (190) than the *Botswana Guardian* (148). There was a phenomenal increase in such reports in *The Voice* in 2006 (28.4%) over and above the 20% or less recorded in other years. For the *Botswana Guardian* the highest report was recorded in 2005 (31.7%) [See table 1].

The yearly breakdown of the stories indicate that for the year 2002 in *The Voice* newspaper, violence by men directed at women constituted the majority of the reports (36.8%) followed by violence directed at children by their parents (21%). The percentage of stories depicting violence by women against men and by children against their parents constituted 7.9% each. Violence among siblings accounted for 5.3%, while family violence directed at women, violence by rivals and violence perpetrated by a maid against her employer constituted 2.6% each. Follow-up stories giving new developments on these domestic situations constituted 13.2%. In the *Botswana Guardian,* violence by men directed at women comprises the majority of the reports at 30.8% followed by violence directed at children by their parents at 27%.

The percentage of stories portraying violence by rivals and follow-up stories presenting the latest occurrences on these domestic violence situations both comprise 11.5% each. Violence committed by men against other men and violence against men committed by women accounted for 7.7% each. Violence against men by family members comprised 3.8% (see table 2).

**Table 2**
**Breakdown of domestic violence stories in The Voice and Botswana Guardian newspapers (2002)**

| Type of violence | No. & percentage of stories in The Voice | No. & percentage of stories in Botswana Guardian |
|---|---|---|
| Men against women | 14 (36.8%) | 8 (30.8%) |
| Parents against children | 8 (21.1%) | 7 (27%) |
| Follow up stories | 5 (13.2%) | 3 (11.5%) |
| Children against parents | 3 (7.9%) | - |
| Women against men | 3 (7.9%) | 2 (7.7%) |
| Siblings | 2 (5.3%) | - |
| Family against women/men | 1 (2.6%) | 1 (3.8%) |
| By rivals | 1 (2.6%) | 3 (11.5%) |
| Maid against employer | 1 (2.6%) | - |
| Men against men | - | 2 (7.7%) |
| **Total** | **38 (100%)** | **26 (100%)** |

In 2003, *The Voice* newspaper reported 30 domestic violence stories distributed as follows: men against women constituted the majority (60%) while violence directed against children by their parents accounted for 20%. The reported cases of violence perpetrated by women against men was 6.7%. Violence by children against their parents, family against a member and employer against domestic worker as well as those emanating from divorce proceedings accounted for 1% each. There were 26 domestic violence stories in *Botswana Guardian* distributed as follows:

Violence perpetrated by men against women, which were the highest, amounted to 38.6% while follow-up stories that had been reported earlier by the newspaper made up 27%. Violence by women directed at men and violence by children on parents both accounted for 11.5% each. On the other hand, violence by men against other men, on children by parents and on maid by the employer each accounted for 3.8% (see table 3).

**Table 3**
**Breakdown of domestic violence stories in The Voice and Botswana Guardian newspapers (2003)**

| Type of violence | No. & percentage of stories in The Voice | No. & percentage of stories in Botswana Guardian |
|---|---|---|
| Men against women | 18 (60%) | 10 (38.6%) |
| Parents against children | 6 (20%) | 1 (3.8%) |
| Women against men | 2 (6.7%) | 3 (11.5%) |
| Follow up stories | - | 7 (27%) |
| Children against parents | 1 (3.3%) | 3 (11.5%) |
| Divorce proceedings | 1 (3.3%) | - |
| Employer against maid | 1 (3.3%) | 1 (3.8%) |
| Family against men | 1 (2.6%) | - |
| Men against men | - | 1 (3.8%) |
| **Total** | **30 (100%)** | **26 (100%)** |

In 2004, men continued to dominate news reports in *The Voice* and *Botswana Guardian* newspaper in regards to inflicting harm on their wives and girlfriends, rivalled only in this year as reported by *The Voice* by parents' violence against children (35.5% each). Violence perpetrated by women against men accounted for 13%.

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Violence by siblings and those emanating from divorce proceedings as well by children against parents accounted for 3.2% each. Follow up stories on domestic violence earlier reported by the newspaper accounted for 6.5%. Similarly, *Botswana Guardian* newspaper reports in regards to men inflicting harm on their wives and girlfriends was an alarming 48%. Violence by men against men followed with 21.7% and violence on children by parents and follow-up stories accounted for 13% each. Violence perpetrated by family members on women was least with 4.3% (see table 4).

**Table 4**

**Breakdown of domestic violence stories in The Voice and Botswana Guardian newspapers (2004)**

| Type of violence | No. & percentage of stories in The Voice | No. & percentage of stories in Botswana Guardian |
|---|---|---|
| Men against women | 11 (35.5%) | 11 (48%) |
| Parents against children | 11 (35.5%) | 3 (13%) |
| Women against men | 4 (13%) | - |
| Men against men | - | 5 (21.7%) |
| Follow up stories | 2 (6.5%) | 3 (13%) |
| Family against women | - | 1 (4.3%) |
| Children against parents | 1 (3.2%) | - |
| Siblings | 1 (3.2%) | - |
| Divorce | 1 (3.2%)) | - |
| **Total** | **31 (100%)** | **23 (100%)** |

In 2005, *The Voice* recorded 37 domestic violence stories, the highest being violence by men against women with 46%. Follow-up stories were the next in line with 16.2%, followed closely by violence perpetrated by children against parents with 10.8%. The percentage of violence of family against men, siblings and men against men were 5.4% each. The least was violence by women against men, which accounted for 2.7%. The breakdown for 2005 for *Botswana Guardian* shows that violence perpetrated by men against women remained high (36.2%). While on the other hand violence by parents against children and violence by men on men accounted for 17% each. Violence by women against men followed at 8.5%. The follow-up stories that were recorded were 6.4% and violence of family against men was also the same percentage. Violence of children against parents constituted 4.3% and violence by siblings accounted to 4.3% (see table 5).

**Table 5**

**Breakdown of domestic violence stories in The Voice and Botswana Guardian newspapers (2005)**

| Type of violence | No. & percentage of stories in The Voice | No. & percentage of stories in Botswana Guardian |
|---|---|---|
| Men against women | 17 (46%) | 17 (36.2%) |
| Parents against children | 3 (8.1%) | 8 (17.0%) |
| Follow up stories | 6 (16.2%) | 4 (8.5%) |
| Women against men | 1 (2.7%) | 4 (8.5%) |
| Family against men | 2 (5.4%) | 3 (6.2%) |
| Siblings | 2 (5.4%) | 2 (4.3%) |
| Men against men | 2 (5.4%) | 8 (17%) |
| Children against parents | 4 (10.8%) | 2 (4.3%) |
| **Total** | **37 (100%)** | **47 (100%)** |

In 2006 there were 54 domestic violence stories in *The Voice*; the highest being violence by men against women (53.7%). Violence by parents against children was the next in line with 14.8% followed by violence by men against men and women against women both with 7.4%. Violence by children against parents was 5.5%. The percentage of violence of family against men and women accounted for 3.7% each. The least were violence amongst siblings and follow-up stories with each accounting for 1.9%. In 2006 there were 26 domestic violence stories in *Botswana Guardian*; the highest type being violence by men against women with a whopping 73.1%. There we no follow-up stories. The percentage of parents against children and men against men were both 7.7% only. The next in line each with 3.8% were violence by women against women, violence among siblings and violence by men against other family members (see table 6).

**Table 6**
**Breakdown of domestic violence stories in The Voice and Botswana Guardian newspapers (2006)**

| Type of violence | No. & percentage of stories in The Voice | No. & percentage of stories in Botswana Guardian |
|---|---|---|
| Men against women | 29 (53.7%) | 19 (73.1%) |
| Parents against children | 8 (14.8%) | 2 (7.69%) |
| Follow up stories | 1 (1.9%) | - |
| Women against men | 2 (3.7%) | 1 (3.8%) |
| Family against men | 2 (3.7%) | - |
| Man against family | - | 1 (3.8%) |
| Siblings | 1 (1.9%) | 1 (3.8%) |
| Men against men | 4 (7.4%) | 2 (7.69%) |
| Children against parents | 3 (5.5%) | - |
| Women against women | 4 (7.4%) | - |
| **Total** | **54 (100%)** | **26 (100%)** |

**Discussion of findings**

*The Voice*'s human-interest brand of journalism covers a lot of ground with particular emphasis on the sensational. And for effect, bold breathtaking headlines are employed with pictures to grab attention and make the editions a must read. An example is this head turner – "Rape Spree: over 72 women raped over the festive season" – with a rider 'Women under siege: According to statistics every 12 minutes a woman is raped."[4] This same treatment is accorded all other stories including the one on domestic violence. A lot of details are usually provided, sometimes with an editorial advising caution/restraint or attempting to galvanise relevant agencies to take action to stop wrong or illegal behaviour. The *Botswana Guardian,* on the other hand, reports facts in a straightforward manner and does not attempt to sensationalise the occurrences. It hardly ever has any captivating pictures to draw the reader's attention to the story.

In examining the specific treatment of domestic violence stories, the discussion will take the form of these sub divisions:

*1. Violence by men against women*

From the findings of this study, according to both *The Voice* and the *Botswana Guardian* newspapers, this particular form of violence was more rampant than other forms. Usually, it is this form that readily comes to mind in any discussion of domestic violence, although from the tables above the malaise is spreading in various directions. From the news reports, this particular aspect of domestic violence had various manifestations. One being denial of conjugal rights and associated violence as this news report indicates – "lack of sexual appetite lands man in court."[5] According to the report, Clophas Sizeze dismissed his wife of fourteen year's allegation that he cannot perform his conjugal duties because he was cheating on her, even though he admitted being

unable to satisfy her sexual yearnings. The wife appeared to be adamant that he live up to his responsibilities, postulating that:

> I even asked him to see a doctor about the elapse (sic) of his sexual interest but he just ignored me. Last night when I woke him up so that we could make love, he punched me in the face and threatened to attack me with an axe if I persisted with my sexual demands.

Some of the reports in the two newspapers were about senseless violence that resulted in murder, terrible scars and damage to property. In an article entitled "Married man beheads young lover,"[6] yet another gruesome act of passion-killing is evidenced when the life of a young primary school teacher is ended by a man, suspected to be her lover!

In some other instances, jilted men took out their rage on their ex. In an article entitled, "Teenager kills girlfriend,"[7] one such man repeatedly stabbed his girlfriend because she wanted to end the affair. In some other cases, as in this story captioned "Man batters wife and leaves her for dead,"[8] the scorned Kanye man could not live with his wife's poor financial management and out of frustration beat her to a pulp with a dehorning iron and left her for dead. Another woman was stabbed between the legs by her lover[9].

*2. Violence by parents against children*

Even parents who are supposed to care for their children also wreaked untold havoc on them. In *The Voice* newspaper, this form of violence took various forms. "Old man on rape trial"[10] reported the rape of the daughter of his step-daughter. Another killed his 10-year old daughter[11] and yet another couple imprisoned their daughter at home for thirteen years in the belief she was possessed by ancestral spirits[12].

Some violent forms just go to show the warped minds of their perpetrators. In a story captioned "Daddy's girl: Daughter's affair with step father divides family"[13], the infuriated stepfather dispatched the girl to the great beyond because she was no longer interested in him, having fallen in love with a younger man. Another man killed his daughter on the advice of a traditional witch-doctor in the belief that his cattle would multiply[14].

Articles in the *Botswana Guardian* also indicate that men are not the only perpetrators of this form of violence; women also played a role in this ignoble form of abuse. A case in which police found a baby dumped underneath a Motopi tree in Selebi Phikwe by the mother suggests that she wanted the baby to die[15]. Another newly born baby was found in a bush at Area W in Francistown. The baby, who is alleged to have been crying loudly, was found by people passing near the area[16]. The baby was still alive and taken to the hospital.

In a strangely disturbing story entitled "Father faces rape charges,"[17] a 59-year old man allegedly had sex with his 11-year old daughter. According to reports, the old man had been sleeping with his school-going child for over a year.

In both papers, there were also other reports of fathers refusing to pay child maintenance.

*3. Violence by women against men*

The women were not wholly innocent when it comes to abuse. In a story captioned "Burning passion,"[18] when a popular local musician took a new girlfriend, his former girlfriend went to his apartment, locked herself in and set fire to the building. The police eventually rescued her, but not before damages to property were made, put at P12000. Some others did more than arson. A staff nurse confessed to the murder of Sergeant Kotlhao Phatshwane in a story captioned "Girlfriend arrested for BDF soldier's murder."[19] In some instances, their actions had unintended consequences as in the news stories "Jilted lover sets himself ablaze"[20] and "Dead man talking"[21], when the men got in harm's way because they lost the love of their lives.

*4. Children's violence against parents*

Children also had stories in the newspapers, showing that they were not entirely harmless in their relationship with their parents. In a news story entitled "A hungry man is an angry man"[22] the report had it that:

> Police in Francistown are holding a 23-year old man who allegedly killed his mother over a plate of food for

questioning. The unemployed man is said to have grabbed his mother after a scuffle over food ensued at their house and banged her head against a wall. Police could not confirm whether she died from the beating.

In "deadly drunk,"[23] a drunken woman burnt four huts and tried to strangle her mother. In another news story, a man killed his father and two of his relatives[24]. Another youth was dragged to court for stealing his mother's money, shoes and wrist watch[25].

*5. Other forms of domestic violence*

In addition, other forms did feature, though not as rampant as the ones recorded above. Sibling violence took the form of beatings, as in the story captioned "Five brothers in family feud"[26], or a bizarre incidence in which an AIDS patient's drugs were stolen by his brother. The culprit was alleged to have sold the drugs and used the money to buy booze[27].

In some other instances, family members doled out the violence. In "Poisoned,"[28] Gorata Molefi told Francistown court that her aunt, Mpho Omphile put poison in her food. In another incidence, a man was attacked on his hospital bed and his family members were fingered as the perpetrators[29].

Rivals also inflicted harm on each other, an example is a news story titled "Love bite cost woman five years."[30] Kedibonye Onwetsi had gone to visit her lover, Jimmy Seakane but upon entering into the bedroom, she met him in another woman's arms – Masego Baretseng. In the ensuing fight, she bit off the top of her rival's ears. She alleged that Masego attacked her first.

Divorce stories reported by the paper threw up allegations and counter allegations by couples that made their marriages break down irretrievably. These bordered on infidelity, spousal abuse, etc.

**Conclusion**

While it is true that newspapers record history in a hurry, it is clear that the issue of domestic violence is a problem in Botswana as it is in most other parts of the world. The good thing though is that *The Voice* and the *Botswana Guardian* newspapers have devoted a lot of attention/space to this phenomenon. One of the reasons why the problem has developed horns and hoofs is the cover-up associated with the malaise. People want to give the impression that their homes and marriages are heaven on earth when so much abuse is going on behind closed doors. Highlighting the problem is a first step to solving it.

Much good comes from newspapers' reports on domestic violence as this brings the issue forcefully into the public domain. Moreover, it is gratifying to note that in a number of instances, in both papers, the law enforcement agents responded in a timely manner to these incidences. In fact, a number of the reports were either sourced from court proceedings or attributed to the police. Publicising such attempts at enforcing one's rights should embolden other victims of abuse to come forward and get perpetrators punished.

In spite of these positives, it is also worrying to see so much domestic violence going on. And even though the findings uphold the ubiquitous reality that men are the main culprits when it comes to abusing women, women also manifest very violent tendencies.

While it is true that the media cannot correctly reflect society in its entirety, as they seem to pander to the sensational, the number of reports and the forms of violence within this five-year period is a cause for concern. This is because there would be more cases of abuse than are reported to the authorities or make it to the pages of newspapers. It is worth repeating that the case of Botswana is a shining example of how these matters ought to be treated. Many in Africa endure hell in their households and relationships and refuse to report such abuses. Such posture has to do with the belief, albeit erroneous, that it is ok for a man to beat his wife. Reports of such beatings brought to the attention of in-laws are often papered over as normal.

One criticism against the media has been the tendency to give one-off treatment to issues in the news. This means that from making headlines, stories can recede into the inside pages and eventually disappear off the radar. This is in spite of the fact that audience members

may still be interested in following the event to its climax. The two newspapers have successfully made efforts to follow some stories, hence giving readers an opportunity to keep abreast of events as they unfold. However, of course, there were many other stories that did not have follow-up and it is not because they were terminal! Overall, the papers deserve commendation for helping to highlight and curb the problem of domestic violence.

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**Writers Bio**

Eno Akpabio, Ph.D is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Media Studies, University of Botswana. Prior to joining the department, he was a Lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication, University of Lagos, Nigeria. His publications include two books *(African Communications Systems: An Introductory Text and Writing to Win Hearts and Minds),* many chapters in books as well as numerous articles in journals. His research interests spans applied and indigenous communication as well as popular culture. He has served as facilitator/guest speaker in the areas of creative writing, news writing and editing, marketing, public relations and communication skills amongst others.

Patience Mathambo, is a Staff Development Fellow in the Department of Media Studies at the University of Botswana. She has a degree obtained at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth, South Africa where she majored in Public Relations Management.

# Media, Activism and HIV/AIDS




Loga Virahswamy, Media Watch Organisation, Mauritius, explains red ribbon. *Credit: Gender Links*



# Debating HIV/AIDS Language: Talking about HIV/AIDS

By Mia Malan

**Abstract**

There has been much debate around the importance of language when covering HIV and AIDS in the media. Activists and people living with HIV have been largely successful in influencing the media's coverage of HIV. While many journalists continue to be unsure of what constitutes appropriate language, even more are aware of such issues, yet question the ability of the public to understand many of these terms.

**Key words**

HIV/AIDS, journalism, media

## The language debate

It is a sultry summer evening in 2002 in Johannesburg, South Africa's sprawling metropolis. The South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC) 8 pm news bulletin is about to be broadcast. The service's health correspondent has filed a story on the exorbitant prices of anti-retrovirals in the country. The report's focus is on a woman with HIV who cannot afford the life prolonging medication.

The journalist has written a note in the corporation's news filing system that the subtitle to appear on the TV screen when the woman begins speaking should read, "Person living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA)" and not "AIDS sufferer" or "victim." However, there are murmurs of dissatisfaction amongst the news team about the reporter's request.

Technical staff say it simply is not feasible; that the subtitle suggested by the health correspondent - which they'd be required to scroll across the screen during the live broadcast of the bulletin – is too lengthy. Some editors say the acronym "makes no sense." Pressure builds as the deadline rapidly approaches.

To add to the palpable tension in the studio, the medical journalist has chosen to be present during the news broadcast, in an effort to ensure that her request that the woman she has interviewed be labeled a PLWHA – or, at the very least, "Person with HIV" - is fulfilled. After all, if the woman is branded "victim" or "sufferer" by South Africa's national broadcaster, it is she, the reporter, who will be bombarded by calls from furious AIDS activists, not the editors or the technical staff members.

The journalist knows this from experience. This is not the first time she has found herself on this precipice, straddling this gossamer line between dedication to reportage and respect for human rights. She is constantly, and deeply, aware of the activists' argument, that HIV-positive people can live long and healthy lives, and that referring to them as "sufferers" or "victims" is disempowering and even discriminatory towards them, and creates the impression that everyone with HIV is decaying in bed, shells pathetically succumbing to death, with no control whatsoever over the situation.

I was the health correspondent described above. Scenarios like the one above took place more than a few times between the years of 1994 to 2002, when I was employed by South Africa's public broadcaster to report on health issues in the country.

As I grew into the job, I naturally formed close ties with members of South Africa's vocal - and sometimes downright militant - AIDS activist community. In the face of a president (Thabo Mbeki) who denied the very existence of the virus present in many of their bodies, and communities that often attacked, viciously assaulted and sometimes murdered those found to be HIV-positive, these advocacy groups exuded pure strength and bitter determination. They could not have survived otherwise. It was upon their instruction – and often their brutal insistence – that I learned to avoid the use of terms they considered stigmatising and insulting when I reported on AIDS.




Rose Thamae leads march, more positive images help to reduce stigma and discrimination. *Credit: Gender Links*

However, at the time, many of my editors argued that because they did not have access to the necessary drugs, most South Africans infected with HIV were indeed "suffering victims," and would eventually fall sick with AIDS-related illnesses and die. They pointed out that the media referred to people with other chronic illnesses, such as diabetes and cancer, as "sufferers" and "victims," and asked why AIDS should be treated "differently" and "specially."

The difference is, of course, that the HIV epidemic is the most politicised and stigmatised disease the world has ever seen. Moreover, the manifestation of this is especially prevalent in a country like South Africa. The mere fact that there are AIDS activists and not cancer or malaria activists is incontrovertible proof thereof. Language and politics are intertwined; language shapes beliefs and influences behaviour.

When AIDS interest groups put pressure on journalists to use certain terms surrounding HIV, and to avoid others, they exercise great and unprecedented influence over the media, and in so doing, influence the way that members of the public talk about the epidemic.

In the case of AIDS, insensitive language and inaccurate medical terms can foment stigma and discrimination.

Anton Harber, the head of the Journalism Programme that hosts the HIV/AIDS and the Media Program at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa, says, "Journalists have a fundamental responsibility to use language accurately and appropriately" and should strive to minimise any harm they may cause through usage of certain terms.

Nevertheless, the task of language usage when reporting on AIDS and the people it affects is sometimes more daunting than it sounds.

The latest list of the UNAIDS Terminology Guidelines contains 14 pages of terms that reporters are often expected to use – many of them politically correct non-governmental organisation (NGO) jargon, such as "orphans and vulnerable children", "opportunistic infections" and "client-initiated testing" that many newspaper readers, radio listeners and TV viewers are

unlikely to understand.

To the ears of seasoned media practitioners, many of these terms also sound boring and colourless. The list of "politically correct" AIDS terms continues to lengthen, with activists becoming increasingly prescriptive and pushy when attempting to compel journalists to use their preferred terminology.

**Local Voices on HIV/AIDS**

In 2002, Internews launched the Local Voices project in Nigeria and Kenya, with support from the US Agency for International Development and continuing support from the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), to train and support local radio journalists, talk show hosts and DJs to improve their reporting and programming on issues related to HIV/ AIDS. In 2005-06, the project expanded to Ethiopia and Cote d'Ivoire and included support for print journalists. Internews has also conducted support activities for improved HIV/AIDS coverage in Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos, in partnership with Internews Europe's project, Turnaround Time. Internews is also launching a Local Voices project in Tamil Nadu, India. Through practical training in technical radio production skills, script writing, research, as well as the science of HIV, participants learn how to create and improve reports on HIV/AIDS. Graduates have ongoing access to a media resource centre and technical support from an experienced journalism trainer.




Kenyan radio journalists on a site visit to the Kenya Medical Research Institute during an Internews HIV journalism training
*Credit: Benjamin Kiplagat*

"I've often bristled when told by public health colleagues that I can't or shouldn't use certain words because they 'carry a different meaning' in the context of HIV/AIDS," says John Pitman, a former Voice of America journalist now working as a blood safety technical advisor for a United States government HIV programme. Pitman believes that journalists should be aware of the "risks attached to certain words" like "sufferer" or "victim" but that "they should not be forced to use the dissembling jargon of global health, if it undermines their ability to tell a story truthfully and honestly."

Professor Harber echoes this, arguing that reporters should not allow anyone to prescribe to them. "We should use our judgment to select the appropriate words and phrases, but keep a keen ear for suggestions that the language we choose may be harmful or inaccurate. In other words, we should listen to activists - but not allow them to decide (what language reporters use). Activists, after all, may have special interests, or a narrow view - or they may be just plain wrong."

A study conducted by the University of the Northwest in South Africa in 2005 found that the country's print media regularly portrayed people with HIV as "victims," and that such language usage negatively influenced the way in which readers talked about the disease. However, the research also argued that the many terms that activists demand that people use when describing the epidemic, were sometimes unrealistic.

"What is HIV/AIDS other than a 'dreaded disease'?" the researchers asked. "It is to some extent necessary to tell people how ravaging AIDS is, to make sure they do not become unconcerned, without falling into the trap of sensationalism."

It is not only the South African media that sometimes uses words that AIDS activists and experts do not approve of. Many United States newspapers and broadcasters do the same. A search of the *Washington Post* and CNN archives from the past year shows that terms such as "fight" or "war" against AIDS, AIDS "victim", "patient" and "AIDS virus" – terms that AIDS activists disapprove of for various reasons – remain common.

However, many in the media say there are good reasons for this. Some media professionals argue that a blanket ban of certain terms is not constructive.

**Summary of preferred terminology**

| Do not use this | Use this |
|---|---|
| HIV/AIDS | Use HIV unless specifically referring to AIDS. Examples include people living with HIV, the HIV epidemic, HIV prevalence, HIV prevention, HIV testing, HIV-related disease; AIDS diagnosis, children made vulnerable by AIDS, children orphaned by AIDS, the AIDS response. Both HIV epidemic and AIDS epidemic are acceptable. |
| AIDS virus | There is no "AIDS virus". The virus associated with AIDS is called the Human Immunodeficiency Virus, or HIV. Please note: the phrase HIV virus is redundant. Use HIV. |
| AIDS-infected | Avoid the term infected. Use person living with HIV or HIV-positive person. No one can be infected with AIDS, because it is not an infectious agent. AIDS is a surveillance definition meaning a syndrome of opportunistic infections and diseases that can develop as immunosuppression deepens along the continuum of HIV infection from primary infection to death. |
| AIDS test | There is no test for AIDS. Use HIV or HIV antibody test. |
| AIDS sufferer or victim | The word "victim" is disempowering. Use person living with HIV. Use the term AIDS only when referring to a person with a clinical AIDS diagnosis. |
| AIDS patient | Use the term patient only when referring to a clinical setting. Preferred: patient with HIV-related illness. |
| Risk of AIDS | Use risk of HIV infection; risk of exposure to HIV. |
| High(er) risk groups; vulnerable groups | Key populations at higher risk (both key to the epidemic's dynamics and key to the response) |
| Commercial sex work | Sex work or commercial sex or the sale of sexual services |
| Prostitute | Use only in respect to juvenile prostitution; otherwise use sex worker. |
| Intravenous drug user | Use injecting drug user. Drugs may be injected subcutaneously, intramuscularly or intravenously. |
| Sharing (needles, syringes) | Use non-sterile injecting equipment if referring to risk of HIV exposure; use contaminated injecting equipment if the equipment is known to contain HIV or if HIV transmission has occurred. |
| Fight against AIDS | Response to AIDS |
| Evidence-based | Evidence-informed |
| HIV prevalence rates | Use HIV prevalence. The word 'rates' connotes the passage of time and should not be used here. |
| Acronyms and abbreviations | Please spell out all terms in full. For example PMTCT should be prevention of mother-to-child transmission, etc. |

*Full guidelines available http://data.unaids.org/pub/Manual/2007/20070328_unaids_terminology_guide_en.pdf*

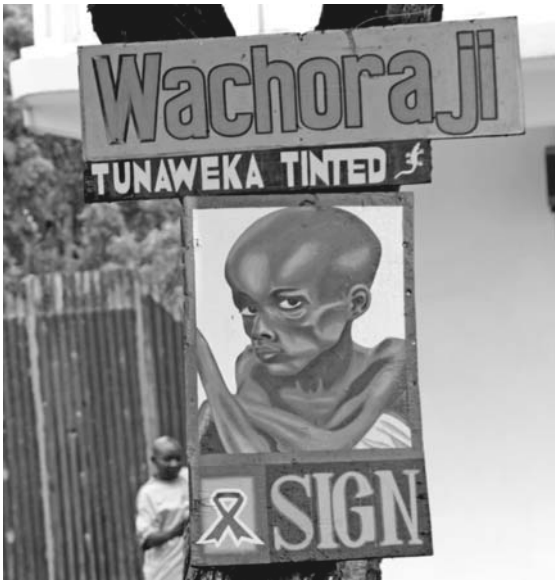
"It's about using a term responsibly and sensitively," says one of South Africa's leading health journalists, Anso Thom. "I think when you use 'sufferer' within context, it says more than a million words could ever say. But then you have to understand that you need to communicate the context within which you are using it."

John Pitman agrees. He argues that many people still die because of HIV-related illnesses - despite the fact that ARV's are becoming increasingly accessible.

"(The term) 'living with' has its place to describe the courage and humanity of people struggling to survive – but 'suffering' remains a reality across the world. It

shouldn't be banished from stories about the pandemic," he emphasises.

The UNAIDS preferred terminology list also disapproves of referring to the "response" to AIDS as the "fight" or "war" against AIDS. The authors argue that these words are "combatant language" that can instill fear, and therefore instill negativity around HIV/AIDS in the public mind.




Images that use scare tactics, such as this poster in Tanzania, may further increase stigma. *Credit: Trevor Davies*

However, even the experts are extremely confused about the language they should use – or they simply disagree with the prescriptions forced upon them by AIDS advocacy organisations. In the March 9 edition of the *Washington Blade*, a weekly newspaper published in Washington D.C. with a predominantly gay readership, the United States Department of Health and Human Services and National Institutes of Health advertised for HIV-positive volunteers for a clinical trial using the catch phrase: "Help in the fight against HIV/AIDS."

Often, the activists themselves use language that they say they don't approve of. According to the UNAIDS list, it is scientifically incorrect to say that "AIDS has killed someone" or that "someone has died of AIDS." It should be "HIV-related" or "AIDS-related illness," because AIDS – a syndrome – can't lead to death. Yet, on 20 February this year, the South African Treatment Action Campaign's (TAC) Nathan Geffen, a leading AIDS activist in SA, published an article that used the following sentence as its opener: "In 1997, Judge Edwin Cameron nearly died of AIDS."

Most people will, of course, understand what Geffen meant with his sentence; it is, after all, written in the way that most people generally talk about AIDS. Yet, according to many activists, it is scientifically incorrect and may even be discriminatory.

Journalists often ask: If the experts and activists themselves alternate terms about AIDS, how do they expect the media to constantly conform to their often brusque demands?

It is doubtful whether readers, listeners and viewers are able to understand many of these "preferred" terms. Orphans and vulnerable children (OVC's) is another politically correct term that many experts demand reporters to use. However, according to Thom, her readers cannot make sense of it.

"If I had to use 'vulnerable children', they would be really confused. Our job is to help readers understand the issues - not to make it more difficult. I think 'orphans' is a much more dignified term than OVC's. If we use such a term, we are in danger of turning children into acronyms, and that is really unfortunate."

National Public Radio science correspondent, Brenda Wilson - who has frequently reported on AIDS in Africa - is of similar inclination.

"My listeners would not understand what I'm talking about if I referred to children orphaned by AIDS as 'orphans and vulnerable children'. It's too NGO-ish. I just use the word 'orphan,' otherwise no one would know what I am talking about."

For Kenyan radio journalist, Anne Waithera, the UNAIDS definition of orphan – a child who has lost one or both parents to HIV/AIDS – is equally confusing.

"In Kenya, an orphan means someone who has lost both parents. A child with one parent would be referred to as 'a child from a single parent family' and those are very common in Kenya. The word orphan gives the idea that the child is totally alone.... which makes the 'orphan'

statistics that refer to all children that has lost one parent to AIDS-related illnesses open to misleading interpretations."

Yet, NGOs refer to OVC's in most of their press releases and interviews with journalists. It is one of the biggest challenges Pitman faces when training public health public relations officers in effective media relations.

"I try to emphasise that just because they know what an OVC, VCT or PLHIV means - that does not mean they're the right words or acronyms to use when communicating with the public. On a couple of occasions I've asked PR people to read their releases aloud. Then I take the paper away and ask them to describe the event or issues in their own words, as if they were describing it to an uncle or cousin. It's sometimes a struggle, but the verbal recounting usually resonates in a way the regurgitated lingo doesn't."

A recent case in point is that of a television journalist in Kenya. The reporter's editors met with AIDS activists. After the meeting, the activists gave a list of preferred terminology to the editors. One of the activists' recommendations was that people with HIV should never be referred to as "AIDS patients," as, they stressed, many were able to live long and healthy lives and were therefore not "patients." Shortly after the meeting, the journalist was sent to a hospital to cover a story about a person who was sick with HIV-related illnesses. Upon the reporter's return, her editor refused to permit her to use the word "patient" in her script – even though the story was all about an emaciated man in a hospital bed who was – and this could very clearly be seen in the TV visuals – very ill.



Anne Waithera and Nasteha Mohammed interview a volunteer in an AIDS vaccine trial in Nairobi. *Credit: Bejamin Kiplagat*

"My editor says he's been told to follow this list, or there'll be big trouble," says the journalist. "It's now part of our broadcasting code and can't be adjusted." Thom disagrees with the kind of "stifling prescription" that sometimes happens in the AIDS sphere. That certain terms are accorded "usage status" to the "total and dictatorial exclusion" of all others rankles her.

"I think we have to acknowledge that there are journalists who have done a lot of damage by using terms in a derogatory manner, terms that feed AIDS-related stigma. But I think every story is different, every country is different and it is unfortunate if we expect to have one set of 'rules' for all AIDS-related stories."

Thom believes the bottom line is: "As long as we do not harm people, we have to write the story in a way that makes the reader read it, and actually care about what has been written. We are not writing for the NGO community, we are writing for the man on the street. And it is often the man on the street that has the power to change the course of things."

**Writers Bio**

Mia Malan is the Senior Health Journalism Advisor for Internews Network. Prior to this she was the Resident Journalism Advisor for Internews Network's Local Voices project in Nairobi, Kenya. Before joining Internews Network, Malan was the national health correspondent of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (radio and television). She has won numerous awards for health reporting, including the Henry J. Kaiser Award for Excellence in Health Journalism (1998), the CNN African Radio Journalist of the Year (2000) and the South Africa – USA Leadership Reporting Award for Television in 2001.



## Everyone Knows Someone: A Sunday Times Campaign

By Susan Smuts

One day our editor, Mondli Makhanya, remarked that everyone knew someone with HIV or Aids. If we all knew someone, why were we not all talking about it?

We decided to start a campaign to remind ourselves and our readers that HIV was something that affected all of us. Since it affected all of us, we should acknowledge it openly and stop hiding behind the fear of stigma.

We launched the *Everyone Knows Someone* campaign in April 2006, with a number of public figures taking an HIV test. We invited our readers to share their stories. We hoped that we would get a few contributions from our readers to run before the campaign wrapped itself up. We had planned a number of stories to report on and didn't really expect a huge response from our readers.

We were in for a big surprise.

Our readers quickly took ownership of the campaign, sharing stories about losing loved ones to AIDS, recounting their own journeys of discovering their HIV-positive status, talking about deeply personal traumas and triumphs in the wake of taking the test that would change their lives forever.

Every single week for almost two years, we have published a story by one of our readers. No two stories have been alike. Some of the contributions have been by people who are living openly with HIV and who are comfortable with having their names published. Some are by people who have not yet disclosed to anyone, or have disclosed only to a few people. We would like people to write under their own names because each person who discloses makes it easier for someone else to disclose. But stigma is still strong and each person needs to be ready to disclose before they take that step.

For some, the act of writing of their story is in itself therapeutic, because it articulates the feelings and experiences and somehow makes the situation more manageable. Some people have written in more than once, and we often get emails from people thanking us for running their stories. We have not had any negative feedback, nor has anyone expressed any regret about contributing.

Many of the stories are heart-breaking. One of the first we received was from a man whose wife had been diagnosed HIV-positive. He felt that she was being punished for his indiscretions in his younger days. His love for his wife and his desperation to help her was immensely moving.

Another story was by a mother whose son had been deliberately infected by his HIV-positive lover. She recounted how she sat at his death bed wishing she could change places with him.

Many of the writers have spoken about how important it was to disclose their HIV-positive status to others. Once the burden of secrecy had been lifted, they were able

to deal with the psychological and medical aspects of HIV openly. Many of the people who disclosed their status found their courage rewarded with love and compassion. And their openness often made it possible for others to confide that they, too, were living with HIV.

**Everyone Knows Someone Excerpts**

"I was living with the fear that I was going to live for only six months, so I told one of my friends. She promised to support me. The week after I told her, we were invited to a party. I noticed that my friends were not as friendly as usual. We ran out of glasses for drinks and no one was prepared to share a glass with me. One of my friends called me to the ladies' room and told me that she had heard that I had the HI virus. I didn't enjoy the party after that."
- "I've learned to be strong in the face of rejection," Nomvula Shale.

"I attended a funeral one recent Saturday. It was in Khayelitsha, for a very pretty and clever 19-year-old girl known to me as Maxine.* She should not have died, but she was poor and the medical system really did not care."
- "A mother buries her pretty girl," Guy Ellis.

"One of the more significant moments of my life was when Dr Dave informed me of my HIV-positive status. He told me about the implications and gave me the best advice: "Go and live."
- "Positive mind-set keeps me healthy."

"I am not a secretive person to my family. I looked at my mom — I was so scared but I had to tell her. My mom is 73 years old. When I told her I thought she would die but she was so strong and supportive to me. We pray together and hold morning devotion every day. "
- "I was afraid to tell my mom, but she has been so strong."

"Being HIV-positive has taught me to be strong and to work even harder so that I can move up the corporate ladder so that when my time has come, I will leave something for my family to live on." Someday I will disclose, but for now, nobody knows...
- "Nobody needs to know my secret yet."

Read stories from the "Everyone Knows Someone Campaign" at http://www.thetimes.co.za Click on Special

A nanny had the courage to disclose to her employer, and the two of them set up a support group for nannies and domestic workers in their neighbourhood.

Some, however, have borne the brunt of callous rejection. One man spoke about being thrown out of his home and his church, and losing his job. He lived on the streets until a member of a church invited him to a support group, where he found companionship and understanding from those in a similar situation. Much later, his family welcomed him back and his church asked him to speak to the congregation about HIV. His capacity to embrace those who rejected him is truly humbling.

People have written about relationships gone wrong, about wanting to help people who are too afraid to test, about losing parents, children, siblings and friends to AIDS.

Some have written about being infected with HIV before antiretrovirals (ARVs) were available. They had to face their own certain death — but then came a medical reprieve. Others have written about people who refused to test until it was too late, even though ARVs were available.

Reading the stories is like hearing about the lives of your friends and family. Our readers have rescued us from thinking in terms of statistics and demographics. Important as they are, statistics and demographics can never reflect the human toll that HIV takes, in terms of both physical and mental health.

The contributions show us that there isn't a single "type" of person who has HIV. We have received contributions from black and white, men and women, heterosexual and homosexual, young and old, married and unmarried, an Appeal Court judge and a man who lived on the streets.

During the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence, Gender Links has submitted contributions. Some of these have drawn a strong link between the abuse of women and HIV, some have highlighted the way HIV affects children. The voice of children has been rather scarce in the campaign, considering the extent to which they are affected by HIV, and we need to find ways to include them more frequently.



"I became HIV-positive as a result of a gang rape. I know, in the most painful way possible, the link between HIV and Aids and gender violence. I tell my story, over and over again, to get the government to provide post-exposure prophylaxis to survivors of gender violence in the hope that others will avoid the fate that befell me."
- "A funeral every week, but also a life saved," Rose Thamae,



"I asked myself why I was worried about my mother, she was fine. I started to accept that my mother is not just HIV-positive: she is positive!"
- "My mother inspired me to help,"
Mpho Thamae



"My name is Kgomotso Thamae. I am 13 years old and I live with my grandmother in Orange Farm. After I discovered my grandmother's HIV-positive status, I felt very sorry for her. I kept asking myself, "Why is this happening to my grandmother?"...I asked my friends about us starting a support group to help children who are in need."
- "I wish I could protect my grandmother," Kgomotso Thamae

*The three stories of the Thamae women are part of the I Stories series produced by the Gender Links Opinion and Commentary Service for the "16 Days" campaign against gender-based violence and child abuse.*

Our readers have sustained the campaign for two years. They have normalised AIDS in the sense that they have shown us that it is a disease that lives among us. Not one of the people who have contributed to the campaign deserved to be infected. No one does. Our readers have shown us that it could happen to anyone.

They have helped us face our fears by showing us how they deal with theirs. They have reached the human being in us by showing the human being in them.

I don't know whether this is activism or good journalism. Maybe it's a bit of both. The good journalism come from recognising the value of the contributions and committing editorial space to the campaign. The activism comes from understanding that HIV is an issue that we all face in one way or another, and from understanding that a mass-circulation newspaper has the power to take the message into millions of homes. And from letting our readers guide the discussion by sharing their stories about the challenges they face. They are the real heroes. They have taught us to see HIV/AIDS differently.

**Writers Bio**
Susan Smuts manages the Sunday Times HIV campaigns "Everyone Knows Someone" and "Each One Reach Five." "Everyone Knows Someone" is a campaign to encourage people to know their HIV status and reduce stigma. They publish the personal experiences (and, where the writer or subject feels comfortable, photos) of people in South Africa living with HIV or caring for loved ones with the virus. The stories appear in the newspaper or on the website. E-mail your story and photos to everyoneknows@sundaytimes.co.za or fax it to 011-280-5151.



## Making Dreams Come True

By Karolina Pieters

Lying in my bed on the first night of our visit to Johannesburg last week I said to myself: is this true? Can we really be here? Is this a dream come true?

I am a teacher and the chair of the village council in Maltahohe in the dry Hardap region of Southern Namibia at the entrance to the Namib desert. Long before I became a councilor, I started a home for abandoned children. There is a high rate of alcoholism and gender violence where I came from. This is made worse by a high rate of HIV. There are currently 382 children in the home that I started, out of a village of 4000.

Six years ago my colleague Simon Anton and I started a culture group called Ama Buruxa, named for "Simply Amazing," for the children. Last year, I met the director of Gender Links, Colleen Lowe Morna, when she came to Maltahohe to conduct research on gender and local government. She asked me what I would most want for my children. I said, "I would like them to perform in Johannesburg!"

So here we are, and I can only say that this is a dream come true. While we have been here, the children have performed with several other groups from around Johannesburg, including at Museum Africa and at the Constitutional Court. We got a tour of the court and a history of South Africa from apartheid to the present. The children from South Africa and Namibia did an exercise on past, present and future. Then they wrote and performed a song together.

We got to go and see Umoja (the South African musical that took London by storm). What an experience for the children of Ama Buruxa to watch those South African dancers who "dance like demons!" I believe in dance and song as a form of healing. What a healing experience this has been!

In the evenings, we sat in a circle and talked about our experiences, here and in Namibia. For the first time, I got to say "I am sorry" to Johannes* about something that has been paining me these few months. In October, we were performing at an old age home in Maltahohe. Suddenly I noticed tears flowing down Johannes' cheeks. His voice was quivering. Johannes' brother Peter is the drummer of Ama Bruxa. Later that day I learned that the boys' mother had just died of AIDS-related causes.

I could not forgive myself for having allowed them to perform that day. But they told me that they wanted to; that performing is what gives them strength. Their mother was a domestic worker whom both boys cared for lovingly before she died. They do not know their father. Peter is now doing the last two years of his secondary school in Rehoboth. He needs just over R2000 per year to finish his school. Where can I get bursaries from to help the children?

Then there is Rachel*, whose step mother died a year ago, also of AIDS-related causes, leaving behind a two month old baby. She has six brothers and sisters. Her father is disabled as a result of an accident while he was a construction worker. We are not sure if he and the baby are HIV positive

as they have not gone for tests. I had to tell Rachel that I could not take care of the baby; I just do not have the capacity to take care of the really small ones.

These things are so painful. But here in Johannesburg we have been able to talk. At one stage Rachel's father wanted me to adopt her. But I said that is not the right thing to do. She must never be disconnected from her family. My duty is to make sure that she gets an education, so that she can uplift the rest of the family.

Aletta* also lost her parents to HIV/AIDS. After caring for both of them, she wants to be a doctor. There is Ruth*, who narrowly escaped being raped twice. I had to send her to live with my older daughter in Windhoek to get away from it all.

Yes, my work can be very depressing, but it can also be so rewarding. I have trained as a counselor, to help the children, and to help myself. I have learned that when children lose their parents, they become introverted and withdraw. Our role is to inspire them, fill them with hope, make them realise what they are capable of, make them know that they are, after all, "simply amazing."

I lie awake at night in Johannesburg, and the sounds of Umoja, the spirit of togetherness, run through my mind. I am thinking of new dance routines for Ama Buruxa. I am thinking of how to raise money for school fees so that every one of my children can finish their education. I am inspired. I am ready to soldier on.

**Names of the children have been changed to protect their identity.*

This article was originally published as part of the Sunday Times, "Everyone Knows Someone" series.

**Writers Bio**
Karolina Pieters is a teacher and the chair of the village council in Maltahohe, Namibia abd founder of Ama Buruxa.



Ama Buruxa perform at Museum African *Credit: Mariette van Dijk*

**Coração Aberto (Open Heart)**

Published by IRIN PlusNews, this online and print publication is a collection of first-person stories from women living with HIV. The original idea behind the initiative was to portray women from Portuguese-speaking Africa who are managing to live with HIV, in spite of associated hardship and prejudice. Now, the collection has expanded to include men. What began as an online project has now also expanded to include a quarterly publication, with attractive design and photos.

However difficult their lives may be, the portraits are not of victims but of courageous people who face living with HIV and AIDS, who are not downtrodden and helpless, but active and hopeful. Their stories are strong and moving, and the photos are the face of HIV and AIDS portrayed with their children, in their homes, and frequently with smiles. The idea is to bring into the public perception that AIDS is not a death sentence, that it can happen to anyone, and that there is hope and life after a positive diagnosis. That society should help, not reject, people living with HIV.

Networks of people living with HIV and of AIDS service providers, United Nations agencies, ARV treatment providers, support groups and other AIDS actors in Lusophone Africa distribute the publication. For example, in Mozambique, the national umbrella of AIDS service organisations, Monaso, and of people living with HIV, Rensida, distribute the supplement with their magazines (combined circulation 4,800) ensuring it gets out into the provinces to the core constituency: people infected and affected, activists and caregivers.




*Reactions to Coração Aberto*
By Maya Sangawa

The waiting room of Hospital Esperança is full. After an interview with PlusNews, director Antonio Feijó leaves with PlusNews supplements in his hands. A nurse recognises the picture of Carolina Pinto on the cover: "She is our patient!". Nurses and patients gather around the director to see the material. Many people read the few issues together. Everybody notices the photos of a sick, then healthy Ana Maria Muhai. The director asks me to send him more issues.

The same scene repeats itself at the self-help group Paroquia Sagrado Coração de Jesus. Beth, who gave an interview to Coração Aberto, passes her copy along to other friends, who immediately

start reading the stories. Pombal Maria, coordinator of NGO Luta pela Vihda, also asks for more issues of Coração Aberto to send to the groups that his NGO is creating in Benguela, with Oxfam funds. Mwenho, a NGO that targets HIV+ women, also has interest in the material. The organisations executive secretary, Catarina Saldanha, suggest doing an Angolan issue with Mwenho members willing to talk about their condition. "We could publish a big photo of all of them on the cover."

In an ANASO seminar about secondary prevention to HIV/AIDS, Carolina Pinto says that many people have already shown her the supplement: Roberto Campos, from UNAIDS, Antonio Coelho, from Anaso, and others. Many activists ask to take a picture with her. She walks into the auditorium as a star.

When they see the supplement with Carolina Pinto on the cover, many activists ask for more issues. Associação Juvenil para o Desenvolvimento (Bengo), SOS Cedia (Zaire), Grupo Bíblico de Estudantes Cristãos de Angola (Namibe), Prazedor (Huíla), Associação Juvenil Etungafano (Kunene), Associação de Educadores Sociais (Malanje), Associação dos Amigos dos Seropositivos (Cabinda), Cruz Vermelha (Kwanza Sul) e Associação dos Naturais e Amigos de Calima (Benguela) are the NGOs that receive supplements.

Those who didn't get it complain. The PlusNews supplement will be read from Cabinda to Kunene provinces.



In "The power of love: I am HIV+ and my husband isn't" Carolina Pinto shared her story of being dignosed with HIV at 19, becoming an activist, and meeting and marrying her husband, who is HIV negative.

"Many people who live with HIV opt to have relationships only with others who are HIV+. They believe that the relationship stands a better chance to be successful. But this is not true. The fact that two people are infected with HIV does not mean that they share the same thoughts, have the same character, same feelings, that they will live together forever and that love will be more sincere. Love is variable, be it in a discordant relationship (where one partner is HIV+ and the other isn't) or not."

Read Carolina Pinto's Story in Portuguese:
http://www.plusnews.org/pt/HOVReport.aspx?ReportId=70579



# Tsha Tsha: Entertainment-Education Series Challenges Masculinity Among HIV-positive Men in Soweto

By Frederick Oduor Ogenga

**Abstract**

This article is an excerpt from a study that aimed to examine the production of HIV/AIDS lessons on Tsha Tsha Entertainment-Education (E-E) and their reception by HIV-positive men in Soweto, and to find out whether this response affected their perception of their roles and responsibilities in HIV/AIDS. The rationale behind this study was that gender and HIV/AIDS has been critical in interventions aimed at combating the disease. The findings revealed that audiences (HIV-positive men) identified with lessons around HIV-testing, disclosure, support and those that challenge stigma and masculinity in HIV/AIDS. Disclosure emerged as a major theme compared with sub themes of testing, stigma, masculinity and social support to form categories that were presented as the findings.

**Key words**

HIV/AIDS, testing, disclosure, support, gender, masculinity, South Africa, entertainment–education

## Masculinity

The study of gender and HIV/AIDS has been critical in interventions aimed at combating the disease. In South Africa, studies done under African sexuality in the area of HIV/AIDS have revealed that masculinity around sex and sexuality often depict women as more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS than men, and men as the drivers of the epidemic (Kometsi 2004). According to anthropologists, masculinity is a core set of activities or traits which are transculturally associated with men (Morell 1991, 5).

Masculinity is visible around issues such as having multiple partners, fear of testing, fear of disclosure, men's "macho" attitude that ensures they don't seek treatment, and rejection of their partners when they realise they are positive.

Culture partially constructs traditional gender roles, where notions of masculinity thrive, ensuring that men do not take responsibility in HIV/AIDS. These notions have disempowered men, leaving them vulnerable and making it difficult for them to cope with the epidemic.

The perceived vulnerability of women has led to several efforts to empower women with little efforts focusing on men's vulnerability (Kometsi 2004; Gupta 2000; Mane & Aggleton 2001). The empowerment of women in South Africa on gender equality has perhaps threatened and disempowered men. The "New Gender Order" amidst traditional masculinity has left men confused. They have lost their traditional roles dictated by power positions in the society. This is evident in the increase of domestic violence and sexual abuse of women and children including child rape (Morell 2001; Reid &Walker 2005)

However, as my research is now indicating, there are changing perceptions of masculinity, particularly related to HIV/AIDS, that are now penetrating the spaces of traditional masculinity, especially around men's roles and responsibilities in HIV/AIDS. (Reid & Walker 2001; Morell 2004; Garson 2004). Masculinity crumbles in the face of the epidemic, by the fact that men become weakened by the disease and they lose their dignity due to the association of the disease with 'bad sex' that leads to 'bad death' (Posel 2003). This forces men to forge a new masculinity especially around their roles and responsibilities, through taking certain actions at a post infection level. These decisions and roles follow the disclosure of their status to significant others to ensure their well-being and those of their partners. These are actions such as testing for HIV, living positively with HIV disclosure, coping with stigma and opening up for support for themselves and their partners at different levels (partner, family and community level).

Change seldom happens in a vacuum, there has to be social forces that drive the change. One of the possibilities of bringing about change is through the media. Entertainment-Education (E-E), has been used as one of the most effective vehicles for social change. This is evident through the evaluation of audience response to E-E programmes like *Soul City* and an evaluation of the first 26 episodes of *Tsha Tsha,* which showed the television programme contributed in the change of the audience member's perception to HIV/AIDS (Kelly *et al*, 2005). I conducted this research in Soweto and therefore looked at the production of HIV/AIDS lessons on the Entertainment-Education television programme *Tsha Tsha* and their reception by HIV-positive men in Soweto.

The objectives of this research were two-fold: firstly, I wanted to assess the production of HIV/AIDS lessons on *Tsha Tsha* Entertainment-Education and their reception by HIV-positive men in Soweto and secondly, to find out whether this response impacts on HIV-positive men's perception of their roles and responsibilities in HIV/AIDS. The questions I was addressing in this research were; what lessons in HIV/AIDS did producers encode in *Tsha Tsha*? How did HIV-positive men respond to these lessons? And did these lessons help them change their perceptions of their roles and responsibilities in HIV/AIDS?

While reviewing the background literature in the field of African sexuality studies, I realised that most scholars agree that there are different forms of masculinities. From a historical perspective, masculinity as a key concept in gender studies has affected HIV/AIDS in several ways. This is because masculinity has defined and shaped the nature of heterosexual relationships. Masculinity is seen as heterogeneous and there is nothing like a single version of masculinity practiced by all men. There are different masculinities and an increased awareness, by some men, of their identity as a gendered construction that is open to change (changing men).

The nature of relationships between men and women in South Africa and their general perception of their roles and responsibilities within those relationships should be contextualised. These roles are often patriarchal and limit men to exclude themselves in certain critical aspects of HIV prevention, testing, disclosure, care and support (Kometsi 2004, 31-32). Morrell argues that even though most men profit from hegemonic masculinity, not every man holds this kind of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity therefore tends to exclude marginalised groups in the society. Women hardly benefit from this form of masculinity. Donaldson (in Zlotnik 2000, 12) notes, "a fundamental element of hegemonic masculinity is that women exist as potential sexual objects for men." Men gain sexual validation by not only pursuing women but also competing for them. This is where hegemonic masculinity is associated with sexual conquest and having many

sexual partners, partially accounting for the rising infection rates of HIV in South Africa.

Masculinity socialises men to be macho risk-takers and to crave social power. Campbell (in Kometsi 2004, 84) claims that "frequent and unprotected sex with multiple partners may often be one of the few ways in which men can act on their hegemonic masculinity." The active and conscious pursuit of real manhood or prescriptions of masculinity create anxiety precisely because of the shifting nature of the boundaries and its instability over time and place. The socialisation described earlier creates men and women as opponents. It creates the perception that masculine power and status are under threat from those who are not masculine (Hooks in Kometsi 2004, 85)

The effects of this hegemonic masculinity significantly concern relationships between partners, affecting their sexual health, especially when they are HIV positive. For example, one participant his partner will question his manhood. In other cases, this situation is often characterised by men's negligence in parental roles and their negligence of other roles and responsibilities such as HIV testing, disclosure, care and support. All participants found these issues problematic

Considering the fact that men are the ones that make many decisions in the family, it is imperative to ensure that they contribute wisely in decisions concerning their health and that of their partners. The burden that couples face due to HIV/AIDS is associated with the feeling of social rejection and stigma, feelings that are difficult to deal with. This is the moment when men and women are required to work jointly, to support each other psychologically, emotionally and financially. It is likely that the kind of relationship existing between partners can influence the choices they make regarding their health.

With sex being central to the self-imaging of men as real men - men with power, especially over women – women's insistence on practicing safer sex might be seen as a challenge to the power of men (Kometsi 2004, 83). Therefore, in looking at men's perception of their partners in their relationships and within the broader aspect of HIV/AIDS, it is clear that some decisions regarding sex, for instance decisions about condom use, are problematic (Kometsi 2004, 12). Nevertheless, both men and women (the society) participate in ensuring certain masculinities are privileged and not others. Both men and women are active participants in the perpetuation of some forms of masculinity depending on whether they favour them or not.

**Changing masculinity**



Tsha Tsha character Andile cares for his mother who is dying of an AIDS-related illness.

However, masculinities are fluid and should not be considered as belonging in a fixed way to any group of men. They are socially and historically constructed in a process that involves contestation between rival understandings of what being a man should involve. Masculinities are constantly being protected and defended, are constantly breaking down and being recreated.

Deaux (in Zlotnik 2002, 9) observes that masculinity is socially constructed and changes as relationships between societies do, rather than being a natural attribute. Masculinity as a construct or set of attributes does not apply only to men. Rather, it is a construct that may constitute part of the identity of both men and women to some extent.

*Unreal* AIDS review research done by Kometsi at the University of Pretoria on masculinity and HIV/AIDS in South Africa, indicates that men's perceptions on masculinity influence their relations with others, especially their partners. There is a link between some of men's practices and the spread of HIV (Kometsi 2004, 81).

Power as an operational concept is essential in examining how some men relate to themselves, and more importantly to women. Traditional masculinity therefore becomes some men's practices in such relationships. These are practices that dominant images of manhood are associated with (Kometsi 2004, 81).

Connell (in Kometsi, 2004. p. 82) suggests the importance of looking at how men and women lead gendered lives as a lead-in to what the concept of masculinity means. Masculinity represents not just an idea in the head, or a personality identity. It also extends into the world, merged into organised social relations.

**What this means for entertainment-education**

In the socio-economic and political context of HIV/AIDS in South Africa, testing, stigma, disclosure, support and how they relate to masculinity have contributed greatly in the shaping and reshaping of these masculinities. In the political context, there have been debates about the causal link between HIV and AIDS and the crossfire between the government, pharmaceutical companies, civil societies and people living with HIV/AIDS about treatment options, and safety and efficacy of the drugs used for treatment. Within such a complexity, *Tsha Tsha* as an entertainment-education is used as a case study. *Tsha Tsha* strives to highlight issues related to sexuality facing South Africans within a broader framework of addressing the problematic issue of HIV/AIDS.

Men are centrally implicated in the shifting sexual landscape in South Africa. There is a perception that the HIV/AIDS epidemic is driven by men, and men are blamed for the prevalence of domestic violence and child sexual abuse (Reid & Walker 2005, 9; Mane & Aggleton 2001). The concept that it is often men who spread the epidemic to women was ignored until the late 1990's. This is when it was recognised that since men have some power in sexual relationships they should shoulder the responsibility of preventing the transmission of HIV, protecting their own health as well as that of their female partners. *Tsha Tsha* presents new ways of targeting and addressing men that are not reinforcing traditional stereotypes of gender roles and masculine identities. Characters rather model new ideas of masculinity.

In the five interviews that I conducted with the producers of *Tsha Tsha*, there was an indication that they encode messages based on the assumption that human beings learn from their social environment through modelling (Bandura 1977). They use models that audiences can identify with and learn from. While the producers come up with TV messages in form of lessons through the programme, audiences (HIV-positive men) on the other side respond to such messages in a similar fashion.

After being exposed to 12 episodes of *Tsha Tsha* that had HIV/AIDS lessons purposely designed by programme producers about testing, disclosure and social support, the HIV-positive men indicated in the six focus group discussions that followed the viewing that they have learnt lessons about HIV-AIDS disclosure, testing social support through models in the programme. However, disclosure was the dominant theme as they explain in the following excerpts:

> "There is no any other way, you just have to disclose to the person you are concerned with and see what's happening. Then you will get the support or you will get the negative response, it will depend. But it is better to stick to disclosure, you just have to disclose." - Wellington.

> "Yah it's good to talk to avoid thinking too much."

This indicated that there is a level of success in changing audience perceptions if entertainment-education programmes purposely design strategies around HIV/AIDS themes. Other lessons that respondents indicated to have learnt through the programme were the need to discourage multiple partners, living positively with HIV/AIDS, disclosure and stigma, and having a better relationship.

*Tsha Tsha* therefore followed a theoretical approach that allows us to understand and partly explain production of lessons in *Tsha Tsha*, and largely explain the responses of HIV-positive men (audience) to the lessons presented. In this theoretical approach, encoding is done within the genre of E-E, determining the product that appears in the form of lessons. This genre (E-E) is defined by certain professional rules and regulations that define it.

Therefore, the intention of the producers was for the audiences to share their version of meaning to the lessons they present when decoding these lessons.

The encoding-decoding theoretical approach therefore helps us understand how *Tsha Tsha* programme producers design lessons that encourage shared "reading," that is the messages that viewers took away with them. It also explains how HIV-positive men respond to these lessons depending on several other factors. These factors include, for instance, their HIV-positive condition. They identified with the lessons about HIV testing, disclosure and stigma out of the fact that they were already living with HIV (Morley 1980; Fiske 1978; and Ang (in Downing *et al* 1990)). *Tsha Tsha* audiences surveyed (HIV-positive men) had a preferred reading (shared reading, according to producers' intentions) of lessons around HIV disclosure, testing and stigma, and opening up for support and supporting others (their partners) in HIV/AIDS.

**Disclosure**



Viwe disclosing her HIV status

Disclosure is seen as challenging HIV/AIDS stigma and traditional masculinity, where men accept their condition, and take responsibility to continue occupying their space as men. This they do through actions that promote their health and well being as well as those of their partners. The line between gender roles thus becomes invisible when it comes to HIV/AIDS.

Disclosure was repeatedly shown in the episodes through different characters in different contexts. Disclosure of HIV/AIDS in the programme was presented across many episodes as a necessary step towards coping with HIV/AIDS for those infected. Most participants emphasised the need for HIV disclosure as a way of opening up for support and of helping infected people to cope with the physical a nd psychological stressors that come with the virus:

> "Disclosure has helped us to be strong… in such a way that we are getting the support that we need in the support groups."

> "After knowing my status, I told myself I am like that and I will never change and I must give others the word…"

The focus group discussions with seven HIV-positive men indicated that they had a changed perception on various problematic issues in HIV/AIDS like testing, stigma, disclosure and social support. The HIV-positive men identified with the character Viwe (the modeling character) due to her courage to test and disclose openly to her family and community, as well as starting a support group to help others. They saw Viwe as their hero because she was strong and, therefore, gave them hope:

> "Yah for me according to the role that they play I think Viwe is the hero because she is the one who talks about disclosure she is not afraid."

*Tsha Tsha* encouraged HIV-positive men to talk about certain important issues in HIV/AIDS such as reduction of sexual partners, using safety measures, seeking treatment and the need to live positively with those infected. The HIV-positive men saw the programme as very encouraging because it teaches people and gives them information about HIV/AIDS:

> "I see only one thing that this cassette is very good to show people [...people must] go and check their status, maybe this cassette can be

used to teach to change that disclosure is normal."

In line with supporting their partners (their roles and responsibilities), most of them were abandoned and were no longer in a relationship because their partners had "run away" after they disclosed. Perhaps *Tsha Tsha* should have addressed the issue of partners being abandoned after they disclosed. However, after watching *Tsha Tsha* they indicated a changed perception of their roles in a relationship. Most importantly, the findings in this research indicated that masculinity is changing, with some men taking responsibility for themselves and "partners" (others) through disclosure after testing. It has also indicated *Tsha Tsha's* contribution in providing lessons that bring about a change in perception in men's roles and responsibilities in HIV/AIDS.

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**Writers Bio**

Frederick Oduor Ogenga is an independent media consultant, freelancer and lecturer, also pursuing a PHD in Media Studies at the University of Witwatersrand, South Africa.




## Confronting HIV Stigma in African Communities in the United Kingdom Through Media

By Lucy Stackpool-Moore of Panos London (with guidance from Georgina Caswell and Rhon Reynolds from the African HIV Policy Network (AHPN), colleagues from Panos London,and Janet Boston and Anna Roberts from the Thomson Foundation.)

**Abstract**

African migrants account for the greatest number of new HIV diagnoses in Britain in recent years. In November 2007, Panos London and the African HIV Policy Network published Start the Press: How African Communities in the UK Can Work with the Media to Confront HIV Stigma. The publication challenges African communities to engage constructively with the media, and vice versa, to enhance coverage of HIV in the UK so that media coverage can confront – and not perpetuate – stigma related to HIV. The following paper is based on excerpts from the report.

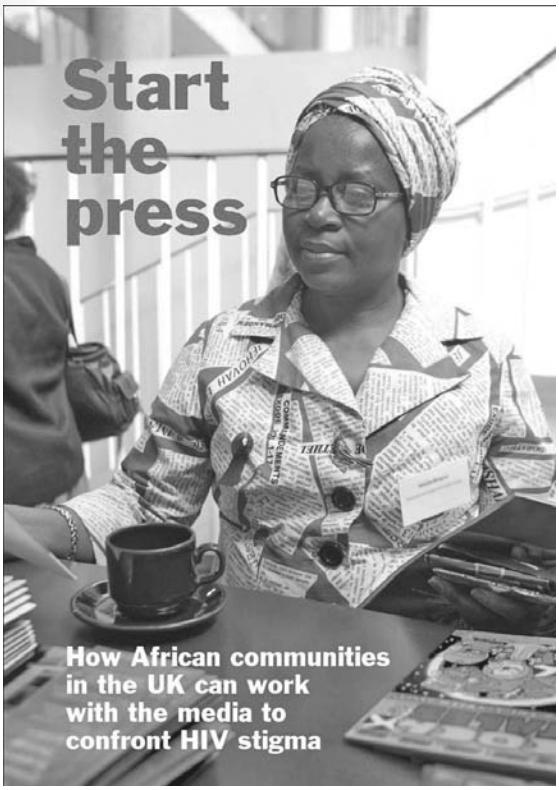
**Key words**

HIV/AIDS, migration

### HIV Stigma among Migrants in the UK

In the United Kingdom, African migrants are among the social groups that are most vulnerable to HIV. They account for the greatest number of new diagnoses in recent years (Health Protection Agency 2006, 46). HIV has always thrived in the fractures of society, among groups who are marginalised because their sexuality, race, poverty or because their lifestyle choices (such as selling sex or injecting drug use) don't conform to social "norms." Once seen as being about individual attitudes and prejudice, stigma and discrimination are now recognised as broad social processes that sustain power inequalities (Parker et al 2002). An African person living with HIV in the UK may experience multiple levels of marginalisation, apparent in inadequate living conditions, unequal income opportunities and limited visibility in policy decisions. These practical realities are exacerbated by current and historical constructions of racism, xenophobia, and stereotypes of African hyper-sexuality.

Stigma limits access to health services by silencing discussions about taboo issues that are integral to HIV vulnerability – such as race, poverty, gender relations, sexuality and drug use. Stigma reveals itself not only in issues that are scandalised or reported inaccurately, but also in what is left unsaid and in voices that are not heard (National AIDS Trust 2007). It is both what is talked about and how, as well as what is silenced and why, that fuel this vicious cycle linking stigma and marginalisation.




To read the full report:
http://www.panos.org.uk/PDF/reports/start_the_press.pdf

The media can play an important part in challenging stigma around HIV and AIDS (Kaiser Family Foundation and UNAIDS 2004). The African HIV Policy Network (AHPN), the Thomson Foundation and Panos London argue that by speaking out, people living with HIV and leaders among African communities can raise awareness about stigma and tackle the discrimination experienced by African communities and people living with HIV in the UK.[1]

One way to achieve this is through better engagement with the media – by supporting responsible journalism that can challenge stigma, and equally by spotlighting inaccurate or misleading coverage that reinforces stigma.

**Key findings**

*Start the Press* draws on a content analysis of HIV coverage in selected UK newspapers (including national and ethnic papers) between 30 November 2005 and 31 December 2006, and two community engagement meetings with people living with HIV and their advocates, leaders within the African communities, doctors, faith leaders and journalists from the national and ethnic press.

*" Stigma to me means to be regarded [as] an alien… in the community I live in. You are not treated the same as others… As an African woman living with HIV I feel I am stigmatised more for where I come [from]. The media has informed and taught the world that HIV is from Africa and the poorest continent, which is equal to Zimbabwe, equals Mugabe, equals poverty, equals HIV. All these boxed in one make me feel so inferior… After all, it is true that I am HIV positive and I am from Africa… I appreciate the sympathy but I'll never tolerate the stigma surrounding my status.'"*

- African person living with HIV
September 2007

The key findings of the research include the following:

- The UK press tends to present HIV as a disease in Africa, signifying a shift from framing HIV as a "gay disease." More than half of all articles in the national and ethnic press focused on HIV in countries outside the UK – mainly Africa. In the national press, 31% (119 articles) included in the study looked at HIV as a domestic epidemic. Likewise in the ethnic papers, 19% (26 articles) focused on HIV in the UK.

- People who are most affected by HIV are rarely interviewed in articles: the main sources of information are government spokespeople (such as the Department of Health or NHS), doctors, or civil society organisations (such as the Terrence Higgins Trust, NAT or AHPN). In the ethnic papers, people identified as living with HIV were interviewed and quoted in 13.5% of the articles studied (12 articles); in the national press, they were quoted in 10% (40 articles). In both types of papers, the most commonly quoted sources were activists and NGOs, government or other political spokespeople, and doctors and scientists. The views and voices of African migrants living with HIV were largely absent.

- There is relatively little coverage of HIV and migration – approximately 6% of the total coverage we analysed (18 articles in the national press and 15 in the ethnic papers). Of this coverage, the tabloid newspapers (Sun and Daily Mail) contained the most stigmatising language, according to the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) guidelines. Articles that focused on HIV and migration in the UK were often framed around legal issues (such as the prosecution of HIV transmission). Only one article investigated the underlying inequalities that contribute to HIV vulnerability for African migrants in the UK; and that was a reprint of an AHPN press release – it was not written by a journalist.

- Coverage of HIV-related tuberculosis (TB) was low in both the ethnic and national press, with two articles in each, which accounted for 2.7% in the former and 0.5% in the latter. Even though HIV-TB co-infection is one of the most common AIDS-related illnesses among migrants in the UK, there was no coverage of the combined issues of TB, HIV and migration.

- Access to treatment and health services was the primary focus of HIV coverage in the ethnic press, rather than transmission or prevention. Articles focusing on treatment accounted for 55% (75 articles), which was almost double the attention given to any other single theme – for example, prevention was covered in 34% of articles, transmission in 28%. This suggests that the ethnic press perceived these issues as most relevant for their target audience – in this case, African communities in the UK.

The content analysis found that HIV coverage in the national broadsheets and the ethnic press was generally factually accurate, clearly written and used non-stigmatising language. Some of the tabloids, however, tended to use words such as "victim", "sex fiend" and "scandal" to frame stories about HIV transmission and often drew on unnamed sources and inaccurate information, as illustrated in the coverage of Everson Banda's story, outlined below.

Coverage of HIV also remains highly medicalised, focusing mainly on treatment, with only a few articles investigating the wider social and cultural aspects underlying HIV or broader issues such as living positively with HIV, vulnerability to infection and access to appropriate health services.

A combination of what is covered in the UK press and what is left out contributes to perceptions that coverage is stigmatising. Coverage that specifically linked HIV and migration in the ethnic press usually framed the stories in terms of conflict and war (refugees and asylum seekers), the prosecution of HIV transmission, human rights and entitlement to services in the UK. The majority of articles in the national press were in the tabloids and predominantly focused on issues of undocumented migration. The framing of HIV and migration in terms of prosecution of HIV transmission and "illegal" migration in the tabloids – the most widely read papers in the UK[2] – risks conflating stigma around each of these issues.



From Start the Press: Masias Cowper of the African HIV Policy Network speaks out about African people living with HIV in the UK at the press launch for a new campaign. *Credit: Panos*

**Case Study**

Analysis of coverage of the case of Everson Banda in August and September 2006 highlights how the framing of migration and HIV in terms of scandal and illegality can conflate and stigmatise the issues and people most affected. It highlights a need and opportunity for people who are most affected by HIV to engage the media more effectively to promote accurate, informed and inclusive debate about HIV in the UK.

Everson Banda is a Zimbabwean man who allegedly had unprotected sex which led to the transmission of HIV to six women while working at a holiday camp in Essex. The coverage of his story highlights some of the key characteristics of overall coverage of HIV and migration in the period studied: the voice or perspective of central actors (in this case Everson Banda himself) was absent from the debate; coverage did not question links between HIV, migration and vulnerability; and the tabloid coverage tended to be inaccurate, framing the story as a scandal, with vague facts about the events. The press presented no evidence that Everson Banda had been tested, or that he was aware of his HIV status (whether positive or negative).

None of the articles named sources, simply referring to spokespeople from the holiday camp and immigration services – yet the Home Office has a policy not to comment on individual cases. *The Sun* in particular featured six stories about Everson Banda, with headlines such as "Lock up the HIV monster", "Holiday camp sex monster has given me HIV", and "HIV fiend put us on death row." The stories address legal aspects of migration by repeatedly emphasising how Banda was sent home to Zimbabwe by the authorities when immigration officials found that he was in the UK illegally. The coverage framed HIV transmission in the context of illegality and scandal. In one story, Everson Banda was cited alongside a separate case of another migrant from Zimbabwe who was working at the Home Office: "the scandal is the second involving Zimbabwean illegals… Two months ago we were told how Joseph Dzumbira got a job at the Home Office after entering Britain as an asylum seeker" (*The Sun* 2006).

By scandalising and linking coverage of two completely unrelated individuals (Banda and Dzumbira), *The Sun* unnecessarily forces association between HIV, asylum and "illegal" migration and risks conflating stigma associated with each of these issues. The press coverage tended to hyper-sexualise Banda, reinforcing stereotypes that link African migrants and men in particular with sexually predatory behaviour. For example, Banda was described as a "burly African" who "seduced many of his conquests" (*Daily Mail* 2006), "woo[ing] girls…'c9 plying them with drink before walking them back to his berth" (*The Sun* 2006), and having sex with "literally scores" of women (*The Times* 2006). Such sensationalised stories can reinforce the stigma, discrimination and internalised stigma that people living with HIV and African migrants experience in the UK.

Readers' responses to the *Daily Mail* article, posted online, illustrate how the framing of the article can influence the framing of public debate about an issue. Forty-six people commented online – mostly from the UK, with 10 from abroad, only one of whom was from Africa (Zambia). Many of the comments touched on morality, HIV prevention and the responsibility of women as well as men for safer sex. Of the responses, 13 directly responded to issues of migration or asylum (28%). One respondent did in fact question the link between asylum and HIV; however, the others referred to issues such as "border control," medical checks for migrants and even "quarantine." This indicates that even though there is no direct link between migration, asylum and HIV in Banda's case, the framing of the story significantly influenced the public responses (in this case select ones posted on the website) and highlights the potential to evoke stigmatising, racist and/or xenophobic comments.

One story published in the *African Echo* was a direct follow-up to the coverage in *The Sun, Daily Mail* and *The Times*. The article, "Let's support, not vilify people living with HIV," discussed broader social and cultural issues such as discrimination, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV prevention, health services and testing. The headline and introduction to the story indicate that the paper is trying to encourage responsible reporting. The article highlights the importance of

different perspectives in the mass media, including different angles and coverage between the national and ethnic press. It also indicates that media coverage itself can encourage best practice across the sector – by printing an article that involves self-analysis, critique and suggestions for best practice on reporting on particular issues (HIV and migration in this case). However, the article was not written by a journalist – it was a reprint of an AHPN press release.

**Media's role**

By failing to do any investigative reporting into the underlying inequalities relating to the concentration of HIV among African migrants and other marginalised communities in the UK, all the papers are missing an opportunity to generate debate, confront stigma, and influence inclusive and evidence-based policy responses that reflect the priorities and needs of the most affected communities. By overlooking the voices of African migrants in these debates, UK press coverage risks perpetuating stigma and processes of marginalisation that entrench inequality and vulnerability to HIV.

Responsible media coverage can challenge stigma by:

- providing accurate information that facilitates access to appropriate health services;
- giving voice to people living with or affected by HIV;
- breaking the silence around issues that can be difficult to talk about – such as sex, sexuality and drug use;
- providing a platform for public debate that draws on a variety of perspectives; and
- influencing policy agendas and framing policy debates.

At the community engagement meetings, people living with HIV, their advocates and leaders among African communities in the UK all felt that press coverage of HIV and migration is stigmatising, highlighting key examples of such coverage. These findings generally support other studies that found stigmatising coverage of asylum and refugee issues in the UK press may exacerbate experiences of discrimination for Africans living with HIV even when the coverage does not explicitly link the issues with HIV.

These findings suggest that the framing and type of coverage of HIV and migration, and the broader history of constructed identities reinforcing inequalities (such as racism or stereotypes about African hyper-sexuality), rather than the amount of coverage per se, is responsible for magnifying perceptions that the coverage is stigmatising. Further research is needed to understand the differences between perceptions and experiences of stigma in the media in comparison with the content of the coverage itself.

Overall, the research indicates that UK press coverage could do more to promote debate about the underlying inequalities and stigma that make people vulnerable to HIV and hinder access to appropriate health services. People living with HIV, HIV advocates and the African community can engage the media to show the human stories behind living positively with HIV, and encourage journalists to challenge – rather than perpetuate – the stigma that exists around HIV and AIDS in the UK.

To confront HIV stigma in the UK effectively, media coverage must be factually accurate and balanced, and draw on the voices and perspectives of those who are most affected – including African communities. Journalists and editors should consider: the way they frame the issues; how they use language (for example, avoiding the use of words such as "sex predator" or "victim"); and the underlying causes of vulnerability embedded in the overlap between issues such as HIV and undocumented migration.

**Tips from journalists for HIV advocates**

People living with HIV and their advocates can engage the media better and build relationships to encourage responsive and responsible journalism. At the community engagement meetings, journalists offered the following suggestions for people living with HIV and their advocates, to help them work more effectively with journalists to enhance media coverage of HIV in the UK:

- Build relationships with journalists, to give them an added interest in checking the accuracy and language of their stories. By building trust, it is easier to ensure that the

issues and interviews are accurately represented.

- Complaints about a specific article should be directed in writing to the editor of the journalist concerned. Complaints about the accuracy of an article should be directed to the Press Complaints Commission.

- Journalists always want a human angle for their stories. Although it takes courage to speak out, journalists recognise that HIV advocates have quotes, case studies and the power to generate a story.

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**Writers Bio**

Lucy Stackpool-Moore is the HIV Officer for stigma and discrimination with the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). Formerly with Panos London and the Panos Global AIDS Programme, she has diverse research and practical experience with participatory communication. Lucy draws from experiences in youth work (Sydney), outdoor experiential education (USA) and research and project management on HIV communication (Southern Africa, Brazil, UK and international) to shape her work with HIV, community participation and stigma.

Notes

[1] Start the Press is part of the Changing Perspectives campaign, coordinated by AHPN, which aims to raise awareness of HIV-related stigma and tackle the discrimination experienced by African communities living in the UK by supporting better engagement between people living with HIV, immigrants affected by HIV, their advocates and the media.

[2] The Sun has an average net circulation of almost 3 million readers per issue; the Daily Mail has almost 2.2 million, according to the Audits Bureau of Circulations UK (www.abc.org.uk). The Daily Mail alone has more readers than The Times, the Guardian, Financial Times and The Independent together (a total of almost 1.7 million for all four broadsheets combined)

**In Practice: Phela Health and Development Communication**

Phela is a Health and Development Communication organisation that uses the power of the mass media (radio, TV and print) to disseminate information in order to effect social and behaviour change. They aim to provide reliable, helpful and accurate information on HIV and AIDS, as well as other health and development related issues that is relevant for Lesotho. Phela's programmes are research-based and always go through pre-testing by both stakeholders and audiences before they are actually distributed and broadcast. Phela supports people to make choices, concerning their lives, which enable them to live longer, healthier lives. Programmes have included

Print

- HIV and AIDS Action Now! With print run of 850 000 (50: 50 Sesotho: English)
- Mother and Child Care with Print run of 7000 000 (70: 30 Sesotho: English)
- Help Stop Women Abuse with print run of 7000 000 (90: 10 Sesotho: English

*Radio Drama*

- 'Musa Pelo- 60 episodes of 15 mins each
- Mafube a Bophelo- 45 episodes of 15 mins each

*TV programmes*

- 2x 13 episode series of 10 and 15 minutes. These were later repackaged into 1x 13 27 minutes episodes.

*Process*

Phela's multi media edutainment is research based and involves extensive formative research process that includes broad stakeholder consultations, literature review and empirical audience research. All materials produced (radio, TV and print) are pre-tested with the target audience to ensure resonance, clarity, effectiveness and to rectify unintended messages. Phela strives to work in partnership with stakeholders, and always calls upon them for input, support and feedback during research, development, production and implementation of multi media and advocacy programmes.

*Next steps*

Phela continues to disseminate well researched information on health and development issues using the power of various multi media and complementing the National Strategic Plan on HIV and AIDS.

- Developing new multimedia programs on Gender and HIV and AIDS and nutrition. These are already underway and will be distributed soon. We will also develop programs based on the ground breaking research we have done on Multiple Concurrent relationships and HIV and AIDS.
- Untold Stories: Phela is also developing a 1/2 hour film whose message is: ART improves the quality of life and prolongs life. Families and communities should support individuals on treatment.
- We plan to embark on an outreach programme that focuses on addressing the communities on Health and Development issues.
- Advocacy campaign by which we strive to influence the enactment of Domestic violence Act in Lesotho. This campaign is aimed at addressing domestic violence as the most common form of Gender based violence and a fuelling factor to HIV and AIDS.

***Contact:***
*Phela*

Save the Children building, Industrial Area Maseru.
Postal address: Private Bag A194 Maseru 100 Lesotho.
Tel: +266- 22327502, Fax: +266- 22327503,

## HIV/AIDS and Media: Examples of Practice

Compiled by Cindy Dzanya

There are a wide range of media initiatives that address various aspects of HIV. The following are just a few examples.

### African Broadcast Media Partnership Against HIV/AIDS (ABMP) - Africa



AFRICAN BROADCAST
MEDIA PARTNERSHIP
AGAINST HIV/AIDS

ABMP is a pan-African coalition of broadcast companies that aim to reinvigorate and increase the effectiveness of broadcast media's contribution to the fight against HIV/AIDS. The ABMP aims to embrace all African countries and to include both public and commercial broadcasters. Inspired by UN Secretary General's call to action under the Global Media AIDS Initiative, the ABMP creates a structured framework for leveraging broadcast media resources with the goal of significantly expanding HIV/AIDS-related broadcast programming across Africa.

A central objective is to promote a new paradigm in the broadcast industry's approach to HIV/AIDS-content based on:

- promotion of a business-centred approach incorporating HIV/AIDS as part of broadcasters' core business and ensuring integration of HIV/AIDS-related messages and themes across all programme formats and schedules; and
- a consistent pan-African HIV/AIDS-related communications framework targeting key drivers of HIV such as gender inequity, stigma, coercion and peer pressure.

To meet its goals, the ABMP will facilitate two streams of content development within the pan-African strategic HIV/AIDS communication framework:

- Core content (generally public service announcements and short format programming) will be centrally developed with creative input from the signatory companies and distributed rights-free across all signatory companies.
- Company content will be developed by signatory companies integrating the key messages and themes of the HIV/AIDS communications framework across existing programme formats.

*Source: http://www.broadcasthivafrica.org/*

**Southern Africa HIV and AIDS Information Dissemination Service (SAFAIDS) – Southern Africa**

SAfAIDS Southern Africa HIV and AIDS Information Dissemination Service

Established in 1994, SAfAIDS is a regional HIV/AIDS organisation based Harare, Zimbabwe. Its goal is to disseminate HIV/AIDS information to promote, inform and support appropriate responses to the epidemic. SAfAIDS provides:

- capacity- building to partner organisations and NGOs to enhance a multiplier effect in good practices;
- technical support and advice to NGOs, Governments, academic and other institutions;
- technical expertise to different sectors, through evaluations, strategic analysis and advisory work, policy development, advocacy and programming;
- assistance to other organisations in mainstreaming HIV/AIDS into their development and workplace activities;
- an interlink between research and programming through discussion fora on topical issues related to HIV/AIDS and sharing good practices; and
- gender analysis through the encouragement of the involvement of men in HIV/AIDS and development issues although women's issues remain a priority.

*For more information, contact:*
SAfAIDS
17 Beveridge Rd
Po Box A509,
Avondale, Harare, Zimbabwe
Tel: +263 4 336193/4 / Fax: +263 4 336195
*Source: http://www.safaids.org.zw/*



Participants at AfriComNet workshop.

**African Network for Strategic Communication in Health and Development (AfriComNet) - Africa**

AfriComNet is an association of HIV and AIDS, health and development communication practitioners who reside, work, or have a primary interest in Africa. Formerly known as the Regional HIV and AIDS Behaviour Change Communication Network (BCC Network), AfriComNet was established in October 2001 in recognition of the severity of the continent's HIV and AIDS pandemic and the need for high-quality strategic communication to respond to the crisis. The Network has three Strategic Objectives and these are:

- to promote effective Strategic Communication practices;
- to increase recognition of Strategic Communication as critical to the effectiveness of H&D programming; and
- to strengthen organisational capacity, credibility & visibility of AfriComNet.

Its approach to communication for social and behaviour change is grounded in the fundamentals of strategic communication, which include: social marketing, human rights-based approaches, entertainment-education, counselling and client education, and mass media.

*For more information, contact:*
The African Network for Strategic Communication in Health and Development (AfriComNet)
Plot 77 Lithuli Avenue, Bugolobi.
P.O. Box 3495, Kampala, Uganda
Tel: +256 41 250183 / +256 41 237222 / +256 41 250192 / +256 414 223837
Fax: +256 414 221340
infodesk@africomnet.org

**HIV/AIDS and the Media Project (South Africa)**

Based at the University of Witswatersrand in Johannesburg, the HIV/AIDS and the Media Project investigates the role and the impact of the news media on the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa. Specific

objectives of the project are:

- to encourage and enable journalists to play an informed role in combating HIV/AIDS;
- to promote discussion and debate among journalists, editors, health professional and other key role players in this area;
- to provide high quality academic research, which ensures an informed and useful debate around this issue; and
- to monitor the role and the impact of the media

They engage in a number of activities to achieve this objective:

- Offer 4-6 month fellowships to working journalists to undertake longer term and in-depth research and writing outside of the newsroom. The writing that results from these fellowships is published in a wide range of media and peer-reviewed journals.
- Identify and research gaps in reporting. Previous and current fellowships have focused on media coverage and audience reception of HIV/AIDS news texts, the role of stigma and gender in Prevention of mother-to-child Transmission of HIV (PMTCT), the strengths and vulnerabilities of HIV-positive children and the role of traditional health practitioners in the mainstream treatment of their patients.
- Host an online resource for journalists on HIV/AIDS.
- Run wider discussion forums on HIV/AIDS and the Media to stimulate debate and discussion amongst journalists, editors, activists, doctors, scientists, academics, government and other stakeholders.
- Facilitate training of graduate and working journalists in HIV/AIDS reporting.
- Assist in the training of career-entry Honours students from the Wits Journalism Programme in HIV/AIDS reporting.
- Produce ongoing research, resources and publications.

*For more information, contact:*
Kylie Thomas, Research Coordinator
HIV/AIDS and the Media Project
Journalism Programme, University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS 2050
Tel: +27 11 717 4086 / Fax: +27 11 717 4081
kylie.thomas@wits.ac.za

**Journalists Against AIDS (JAAIDS) Nigeria**

JAAIDS is a media-based non-governmental organisation in Nigeria working in the field of HIV/AIDS and development. Their mission is to contribute to the prevention, care and control of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria by providing innovative communication interventions that will facilitate positive behaviour change to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS. Their vision is a Nigerian society where all persons are able to freely access information, facilities and services on health/HIV and are empowered to utilise these for their personal protection and national development. They do this through policy advocacy; programme suppor; research and communication; and training and institution building.

*For more information, contact:*
Journalists Against AIDS (JAAIDS) Nigeria
Media Resource Centre on HIV/AIDS & Rep Health
44B Ijaye Road, Ogba
Lagos, Nigeria
Tel: +234 1 7731457/ +234 1 8128565

*Postal address:*
Journalists Against AIDS (JAAIDS) Nigeria
PO Box 56282, Falomo
Lagos, Nigeria

# Media by and for Youth and Children




The Ama Buruxa group participated in a children's radio programme at the Voice of Tembisa radio station
*Credit: Mariette Van Dijk*



## Celebrating Youth Media and Proposing a Way Forward

By Mimi Brazeau

**Abstract**

Plan West Africa has been engaging with children and communities to create radio programmes by and for young people to promote and protect children's rights. The programmes aim to not only inform the larger community about rights issues, but also to empower young people to effect change

**Key words**

media, children's rights, participation

## An idea to reality

"This will never work." Thirteen years ago, these were the words of one of the national radio station's most influential Directors in West Africa. Plan[6] wanted to initiate the first ever radio show travelling in villages and recording in front a large audience to produce a weekly "live show" exclusively with children. After weeks of lobbying, preparation, training and research, the project was developed and twelve children produced the first Radio Gune Yi "Youth Radio" show in Senegal.

Even the producers had their doubts: can children lead a one-hour show, say interesting things and have a genuine impact on the promotion of their rights? Research done prior to the programme's launch revealed that the majority of the population were reluctant to allow children to freely express themselves. 1995 seems like many generations ago.

Since that year, Plan West Africa has continued producing radio shows and extended the production and broadcast of youth radio programmes in 11 West African countries. Hundreds of committed people, radio stations and thousands of youth have contributed for children and youth voices to be heard.

They even "dared" having an impact on the way people perceived children and youth and on the audiences' intentions (let's be realistic) and actions to respect children's rights. The vivid testimonies and reaction about the programmes with youth provide undeniable incentives to do even more and the lessons learnt from evaluations, a framework to focus on quality both for content and process for such projects.

**I am a child but I have my rights too! in West Africa**

"I'm a child but I have my rights too!" is an awareness campaign on the rights of the child, initiated and produced by Plan and broadcast on radio stations in seven countries across West Africa since 1998. The campaign promoted children's right to go to school, to grow up healthy, to have access to potable water and so on. The messages were designed to attract children and their parents by being both informative and entertaining. They defined roles and responsibilities in the defence of children's rights and gave concrete advice on child survival issues.

Burkina Faso was the first country to launch the radio campaign in 1998. Since then Plan Togo, Senegal, Mali, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Benin and Cameroon have produced the drama spots in more than 20 different languages and with the active participation of hundreds of young people. Presenters, journalists and technicians from more than 90 radio stations have been trained to host the show. "I'm a child but I have my rights too!" won several international awards. The campaign contributed to breaking taboos surrounding excision and raised the awareness about issues such as girls' education, discrimination of disabled children and ill-treatment of step-children.

**Project's Impact**

"You cannot change people's behaviour just like that. But at least we have tried and I would say that something has happened. Before nobody ever talked about children's rights." (Radio Director, Benin)

The positive impact on children of meaningful participation in projects that concern them has been repeatedly documented. This experience confirms the results of earlier studies: there are many positive changes in the lives of children who have participated in the radio campaign and its related activities. "The first time I heard my voice on the radio? It was fantastic. The best thing that has happened in my life!" (boy, 16, Togo).

The first and most obvious effect on children who participated in the project is that they have acquired *communication skills*. This means they can and dare to express themselves, also in the presence of adults: "I learned how to talk to adults without being afraid" (girl, 9, Togo); "Before I did not dare to talk in front of an audience but now that is as easy as nothing" (boy, 13, Togo).

Related to this are *technical/vocational skills*; children who participated in the productions worked with professional actors and learned acting techniques, as well as how theatre and radio productions work. Children learned how to act on stage and in front of a microphone, to use their voices, articulate, and interpret their lines.

The participants have also acquired *problem-solving skills*, which closely relate to the increased ability to communicate. Many of the young actors from the productions said that they had changed the way they behave towards siblings and younger children. They have learned to discuss instead of fighting. "I used to beat my younger brother but I don't do that anymore. I try to talk to him instead. You know, even the youngest children have the same rights as we" (girl, 12, Guinea Bissau).




Launch of Bibir Radio, Burkina Faso Credit: Mimi Brazeau

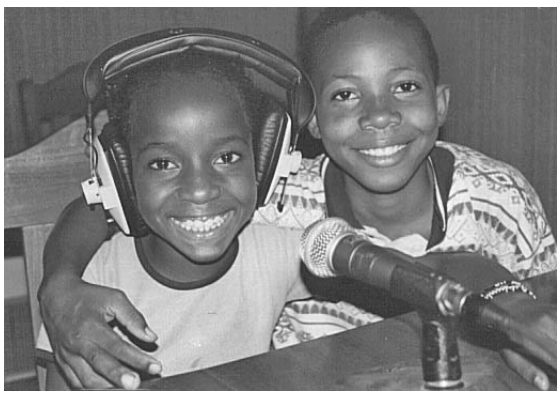
Children have gained *self-confidence*. The theatre activities have helped many children discover their own talents. They have also received the recognition of others. Teachers describe participants in the school

MEDIA BY AND FOR YOUTH AND CHILDREN

theatre groups in Togo as *role models* in the eyes of the other children. "Through this project children discover what they are able to do. There is now a group of young people who make themselves seen and heard. The other children want to be like them" (school inspector, Togo).

Parents often witnessed an *increased dialogue* between them and their children because of their participation. With new confidence and an awareness of their right to express their views, children have started to bring up issues that concern them at home. Several other media projects of this type have proved that there is a correlation between the interpersonal dialogue on an issue and a positive change.

Participation in the project gives children *hope for the future*. They have seen that they are able to achieve something concrete. For example, children who participated in theatre activities had the opportunity to see the reactions of the audience and could sometimes witness the direct impact of their work on others. After a theatre performance about child trafficking by Club Anié'8e, Togo, a boy from the audience stepped forward and said that he had his bags packed and was about to leave for Nigeria. Having seen this performance he had decided to stay in his village. The children from the theatre group were very proud of this. They had managed to change something in somebody's life. For them it has been important to help other children: "If children know their rights they can react when something is wrong" (girl, 15, Togo).



Child presenters in Guinee *Credit: Mimi Brazeau*

Children who participate in this project often become *active in other domains*. Participation gives children a feeling of responsibility and importance and a sense of being useful in the community: "I remember hearing it [the campaign] on the radio and I wished that everybody would listen so that some things might change in our society" (child actor, girl 14, Togo). *Empowerment* in this context is about children learning skills and capabilities to take on new roles and responsibilities for the development of their communities and for the promotion and defense of their rights and others. One good example of empowerment is the young people in Britam, Guinea Bissau, who created an association in order to raise funds for a village school (see below).

"We children learned a lot, but I think our parents learned even more," says a 12-year old girl in Guinea Bissau. In Burkina Faso, the number of adults who said that they had been informed about child rights through the radio campaign rose from 17% in 1998 (the first year of the campaign) to 60.7% in 2002.

**Empowerment and change**

Evaluations have also repeatedly proved the impact of this project on its young listeners, their parents and their communities. Numerous examples show how the increased knowledge and awareness of children's rights have led to a strong mobilisation for their defence – which means that the project has reached parts of its global objective. The obvious follow-up question is: how sustainable are these changes? The first step in a social change process is generally recognition of a problem, which can lead to the identification of a solution.

For Plan in West Africa, this campaign is an encouraging experience to draw on in the development of new media initiatives, further exploring how children can be involved and earn the skills and confidence necessary to take on new responsibilities in their communities.

**Kids Waves West Africa**

Today in West Africa, Plan, partners and youth in 9 countries broadcast radio shows replicating the positive lessons learnt from Radio Gune Yi Senegal and the radio campaign on child rights broadcast in West Africa. New programmes have been created involving young artists in creating songs highlighting youth issues and children rights.

In 2006 in Mali, Plan organised the Youth Media Development Forum (YMDF'06) where more than 400 delegates, experts and youth from more than 60 countries (most of them developing countries) discussed how to do more and how to improve what we do. The 5th World Summit on Media for Children held in South Africa also allowed for fruitful discussions on high quality responsible media. Plan, partners and youth played a major role in arguing that media programs with youth should expand in all parts of the world.

Children and youth have to be part of the discussions on matters that affect them. The media have the responsibility to involve them in the social dialogue. The acknowledgement of their potentialities will lead to the recognition of their capacities. Children and youth know best how to reach their peers, and they also attract an "older" audience interested in knowing what is going on with one third of the world's population who have not yet reached the so called "majority." That is two billion individuals with dreams, concerns, aspirations and ideas – most of them desperately seeking for a better world, a better life. Changing things, improving things will happen with them – or will not occur.

Youth need to understand that their voice is of interest to the general public if it raises the debate to better understand what they live and experience; they need to ensure that what they say helps the audience make informed choices. They need to ensure that the messages conveyed are easily digested; they need to influence the audience to ensure they understand the dangers linked to ignorance that leads to mistrust, incomprehension and chaos.

Talking about youth issues is very important; having youth voices taken into account is vital. However, all this has depth and meaning if actions follow the dialogue. Broadcasters and producers should consider this as part of their mandate to produce more high-quality responsible media programmes with youth and for youth; to be ethical and child-aware; to assist and put pressure on governments to honour children rights; to share resources and skills with those requesting assistance.

The public media should honour their mandate concerning the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child while the private sector should not hide behind the fact they are profit-oriented and that they themselves did not sign or ratify charters or legal documents stating their social responsibilities.

Ten years ago, the World Bank (1999) asked thousands of people what they desired most. Having a "voice" was one of the most frequent replies; second after to improve income and basic necessities. Not being able to have a say in decisions that affected their lives was identified as a key element of poverty in itself (Panos 2007).

Today, with new technologies growing and expanding to the most remote areas, the desire to be part of the social dialogue has probably increased. Youth should continue to request to be heard, but they



Having a voice also important for children and youth.
*Credit: Mimi Brazeau*

should also ensure they convey their messages with accuracy, in their own words, from many angles, and with the creativity and seriousness needed to reach and convince as many people as possible. Today, youth express themselves as young citizens, demanding their rights and trying to understand why positive changes do not occur as fast as they grow up. The Millennium Development Goals and the promised results for 2015 are not close to being achieved. Engaging into the debate those who will be the first target of today's failures is one way of ensuring they will feel not only part of the problem also but of the solutions.

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**Writers Bio**
Mimi Brazeau is the Plan West Africa Regional Media Programs Development Advisor.

Notes

[1] Plan is an international NGO working in 66 countries worldwide to achieve lasting improvements for children living in poverty in developing countries. Plan's vision is of a world in which all children realise their full potential in societies which respect people's rights and dignity.



## Child and Youth Participation in Health Media

By Daniel Walter

**Abstract**

Involving children in media to raise awareness about health-related issues is not only essential to creating good programmes, but also to empowering young people to be active members of the community. Examples of programming by and for young people show that children and youth bring unique perspectives to media programmes, and that once empowered, can successfully create programming that can impact positively on themselves, families, and communities.

**Key words**

children, participatory media, health

### Involving young people in health issues

There is little doubt that children and youth need to be a key target group in work addressing problems related to health issues such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other diseases largely resulting from poverty in Africa and around the world. There are numerous factors contributing to children's access to good health. Most are related to their lack of access to power and decision-making, as well as access to resources, both material and information.

The lower status of young people in many societies means that they are usually the last thought about when making crucial decisions, especially in developing communities. An overwhelming number of children are living in poverty in Africa. Children play a very important role in the family and community, often with many responsibilities within the household. They often wake up first, work the hardest, yet are the last for dinner, and to bed.

Many children and young people are without families at all, facing a difficult reality of life on the streets, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation, no access to education, hunger, disease, unwanted pregnancy, drugs and the list goes on. Often considered the "lowest rung" of community and society, they are often the hardest hit by the social problems that face it.

According to the World Health Organization, each day, some 1500 children under 15 years of age become infected with HIV, an estimated 90% of whom live in sub-Saharan Africa. In 2005, there were 2.3 million (1.7–3.5 million) children living with HIV worldwide, most of whom acquired the virus *in utero*, during birth

or while being breastfed, ways of contracting HIV that can be prevented. For many children infected with HIV, the chances of survival are slim. In 2005, some 380 000 HIV-positive children younger than age 15 years died—almost of all them in sub-Saharan Africa (WHO 2006).

The growing numbers of orphans and vulnerable children are also a problem. In sub-Saharan Africa, AIDS-related illness is the leading cause of death among adults ages 15–59, and as one consequence, an estimated 12 million children ages 0–17 have lost one or both parents to the disease (UNICEF 2006).

Children and youth vulnerability extends across almost all health-related issues. Just as a few examples:

- African children below the age of five account for 75% of those who die from malaria. Malaria accounts for one in five of all childhood deaths in Africa;
- 27% of children under five in developing countries (1996-2005) are underweight; and
- primary school attendance is at 62% in West and Central Africa, 70% in Eastern and Southern Africa, 82% in South Asia and 85% in the Middle East and North Africa. The largest out-of-school population is in sub-Saharan Africa, where around 41 million children of primary school age are out of school.

(UNICEF website – Facts about children)

If we are to turn the tide against many of these health problems, it is imperative to not only educate and inform young people, but to engage in a process of social change that encourages the value of a young person both to the community and to themselves.

This will not only impact on their own individual health, but also the future of communities when they themselves take leadership positions later in life.

**Participatory radio**

Media is widely recognised as essential to the larger goal of protecting children's rights. On the 10th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - at a meeting in Oslo organised by the Norwegian Government and UNICEF - children, young people, media professionals and child rights experts met to discuss the development of children's rights and their relation to the media throughout the world.

From their discussions emerged the Oslo Challenge, issued on 20 November 1999. This declaration acknowledges that "the child/media relationship is an entry point into the wide and multifaceted world of children and their rights - to education, freedom of expression, play, identity, health, dignity and self-respect, protection - and that in every aspect of child rights, in every element of the life of a child, the relationship between children and the media plays a role."

It is important to involve young people in creating media for many reasons. Let us look at the example of participatory radio programmes. Radio has the power to reach wide target audiences, as it is very accessible, relatively inexpensive, and requires no literacy skills. In creating a good radio programme that aims to target young people, one must incorporate the views and attitudes of young people.

Young people rarely want to listen to the advice of their elders, and information from their peers is more accessible and influential. Young people know how to speak to young people. And, surprising to many, young people have new and fresh ideas that the rest of us may never think of and they really want to share them!

Research conducted by the Media Monitoring Project in South Africa showed that young people have opinions and concerns about important social issues. Many children identified basic needs such as food, water, clothes and homes as important issues. Others identified larger social problems such as racism, unemployment and HIV/AIDS. The children explicitly expressed that they would have liked to see information about these larger social problems represented in relation to how they affect children. Other issues raised pertained to emotional well-being, such as love and respect, friends, looking after yourself and parents. The children also identified child abuse and rape as important issues (Daya 2003).

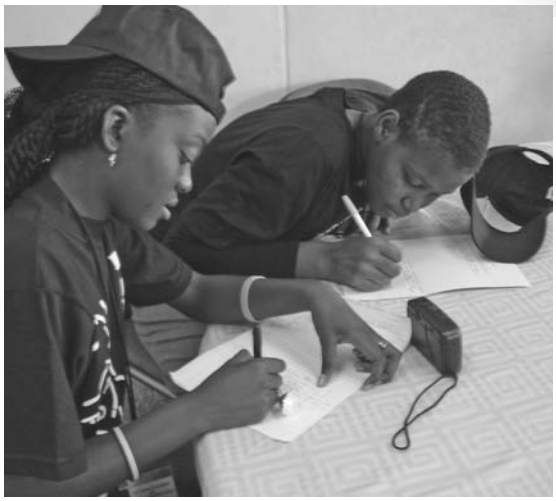
Recalling one of the first participatory programmes that I did with a group of young women in Ghana, I came prepared with back-up scripts, sure that there would not be enough ideas to fill the airtime. Not only was there more than enough ideas, but the issues brought up that addressed HIV and power relations between boys and girls were ones that none of the facilitators had thought of.

Along with being important in creating good, relevant programmes, participatory media programmes can begin a process of social change. These young people are not only the leaders, but also the mothers and fathers of tomorrow; influencing them means influencing future generations. More immediately, as the young people become involved in such participatory projects, they are demonstrating to their communities that young people do have things to say, and can accomplish a lot.

This begins a process whereby society must begin to accept that children and young people have value in the society. As they address issues that are important to them - HIV, Malaria, TB, and also their rights, and problems in their community as they see them, young people are carving out their own space in their societies.

According to Alfonso Gumucio-Dagron in the Radio Manifesto created by the World Radio Forum, "Any radio station that claims to be serving the interests of the community and representing the democratic values of a society, has to integrate children and youth into their programming. It is not just an issue of programming 'for the children' (something that usually adults do), but allowing the young to express their voices and acquire little by little the experience and commitment that will make them opinion leaders and responsible citizens."

He further adds, "The fact that children take in their hands the radio waves is a logical consequence of any democratization process. Young people may not vote, and many of their rights may be restricted because of their age, however they are the pivotal force in any society that looks ahead for 10 or 15 years. The more responsibilities they have in participating in community life, the more today's children will become leaders of tomorrow's communities and nations."



Caption: Ingrid Nkosi and Zamile Mabuza working on putting together report from interviews at 5th World Summit on Media For Children. *Credit: Cindy Dzanya*

**What is participatory?**

So if we agree that participatory children's media is valuable, what does this really mean and how do we go about it? What is the best way to tap into some of what youth have to offer?

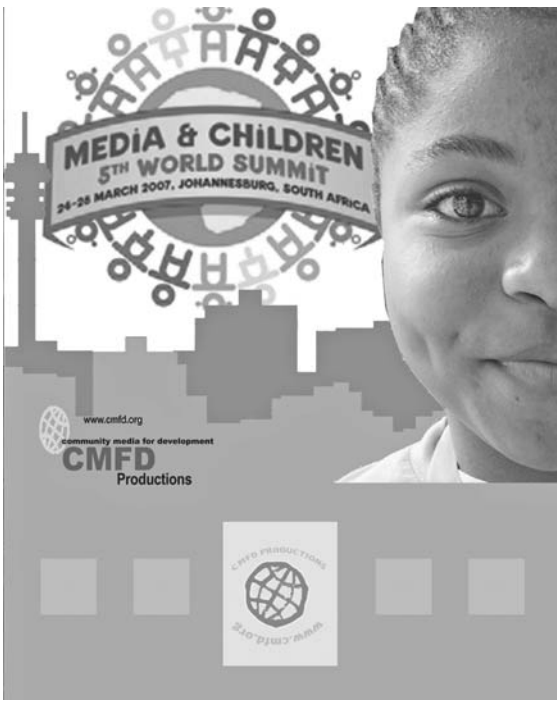
Children's participation means not just giving children the opportunity to be involved, but also to be at the forefront of the decision-making, planning, and implementation process. Guiding young people through the process of developing a radio programme means providing skills, training, and the resources to create a programme, but with the young people having the power to set priorities, create scripts, and have their voices heard. This means putting the programme in the hands of the children, guiding a process that ensures good quality, accurate information, while offering a full range of freedom of expression.

It is a mutual learning process, a collaboration based on respect between young people and those with the technical know-how to make their voices heard loud and clear.

The most visible and successful youth participation programs are usually those that incorporate the ideals of "genuine and effective" participation, i.e. an environment in which young people are involved in every step of the process from planning to evaluation. Challenges to "genuine and effective" participation include: getting adults to let go; creating an environment at home or school where participation is serious and encouraged; overcoming cultural norms that children should be seen and not heard; and generating enough funds to sustain projects (Gigli 2006).

**Working with children in practice**

CMFD (Community Media for Development) Productions works with communities that do not often have access to media, including children and young people, to create media programmes that speak to issues identified by these groups as important. Following are a sampling of how children and youth are producing media for their peers.




Cover of CD produced by children at the Summit.

*World Summit on Media for Children*

CMFD Productions was present at the 5th World Summit on Media for Children from 25-27 March 2007. A group of children at the summit produced a series of radio programmes to provide an opportunity for young voices to be heard, while reaching a wider audience with the issues that were being addressed during the summit. Working in groups of 2-4, the volunteer participants were a young dynamic group that put together some very creative programmes focusing on globalisation and the internet. The programmes include voices from South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Trinidad, United States, Mozambique, Brazil, Angola, Haiti, and Angola. Ideas based on the conference themes were presented to the group, but the young people were encouraged to develop their own ideas and explore the issues how they felt best. Each team worked through the ideas, and then found interviewees. Once the interviewed a number of people, they then developed narrative scripts to glue the programme together.

*Alertas Da Vida Anti- Trafficking Spots*

To help build awareness about trafficking and encourage Mozambicans considering traveling to South Africa for employment to seek more information, a series of Portuguese language radio public service announcements were produced for the IOM, to be aired in Mozambique. The PSAs were developed in a participatory process with Mozambican youth living in Johannesburg. The scripts were written, voiced by the group and produced into the PSA. Each is made up of a short mini-drama, the tag line "Get the facts before you go!" as well as an announcer explaining human trafficking and encouraging people to contact the IOM in Maputo. The spots aim to encourage people to think about where they are going, get as many facts as they can, and contact the IOM for more information or advice.

*National Children's Radio Seminar (Mozambique)*

CMFD Productions collaborated with IBIS - Mozambique to bring together children, accompanied by adult presenters working on children's programmes, from 42 radio stations across the country to participate in the National Children's Radio Seminar 2004. The goal of the seminar was to work with children and their adult facilitators to create a series of magazine style radio programmes produced by and for young people.

Participants gained first hand knowledge in interviewing, creating spots, putting together reportage, and developing radio dramas. The magazines address the right to education, the right to health, and the right to play. The programme also included a manual on producing participatory radio with children, as well as a children's sound effects CD, to help promote good quality participatory programme development.




National Children's Radio Seminar, Chimoio, Mozambique, 2004.
*Credit: Daniel Walter*

*Mozambique Street Kids Radio*

In collaboration with GOAL Mozambique, CMFD developed a radio programme with a group of youth living on the streets in Maputo, Mozambique. The group created and recorded songs, skits, and messages about HIV/AIDS, sexual abuse, and children's rights in Portuguese and Xhangana. CMFD produced the audio programme and also be an accompanying Portuguese language activity book, to be used in literacy programmes. The activity was undertaken as a follow-up to the Stepping Stones programme being used by GOAL to develop knowledge and skills among the street youth.

In each of the above mentioned programmes, the young people involved were not only consulted, but given decision-making opportunities to identify what and how they wanted to approach an issue. Children's participatory radio is an incredibly effective way to include young people in a process that shapes their futures, while educating other young people and reflecting on obstacles that society as a whole must come to face. When children and young people have access to media, they have a voice in their world, and are able to advocate on issues that effects them.

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**Writers Bio**

Daniel Walter is the Director of CMFD (Community Media for Development Productions, a Johannesburg-based media for development initiative that focuses on using participatory media and communication for social change.



## Media Literacy for Learners

By Sikhonzile Ndlovu

"Catch them young," goes the old adage. When it comes to media, this also holds true. Media makes up a large part of culture and society, both shaping and reflecting issues, perspectives, and attitudes.

Youth in South Africa are a very important part of media consumers. They make up the large majority - 70% - of the population.

These youth find themselves in a very fortunate position as they live in an "information technology" era where they can access information and interact with people globally at the click of a button. However, are these youths enlightened enough to make decisions about their lives? Do they know how to interact with the media or even make their own media?

Gender Links realised there was a gap among youth when it came to media, and in June 2007 launched its first ever Gender and Media Literacy course for young people. The aim of this course was to equip young people with skills to look critically at the media as well as use it to their advantage. This is part of creating an active citizenry that does not passively consume the thousands of media messages that they are subjected to every day.

Gender Links brought together 20 young people from four provinces in South Africa for a week-long course that was to change the way that they look at media forever. These youth, who had never in their lives engaged with the media, saw themselves visit media houses and become part of the news making process. In a sense, they became activists, as they were able to articulate their views on various issues affecting them.

This is important, especially considering that media is a very powerful tool in shaping a people's destiny. Like the old saying goes, information is power. Media literacy not only equips youth with critical media skills, but it empowers them to be active citizens. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of our democracy. Audiences can take engage with, and influence, media.

"It is high time that the culture of accepting without questioning stopped. Youth should take control of their lives and use the media for their benefit," said Ntshiteng Rakgwadi, one of the participants.

In this age, we are bombarded with thousands of media messages that we cannot ignore. For example, almost everyone in South Africa has access to the radio. Television is also accessible to many people. Billboards are everywhere and they communicate many different messages. Cell phones also transmit messages across the globe daily.

Some youth are not passive media consumers. They are very much aware of the gender biases that abound in media. Course participant Kgalalelo Kedijang observed that most media have confined women to the private domain while men remain as powerful figures of authority in the public sphere.



Media Literacy class hard at work. *Credit: Rochelle Davies*

During an interview with Kaya FM on the representation of women and men in media, Kedijang was quick to point out that media often presents women in stereotypical ways that limit their potential in life. She observed that media rarely portrays women and girls in challenging positions and roles.

They mostly appear as beauty queens or cooking in the home, while men are represented as powerful and authoritative. She added that girl children are often not aware that they have the same capabilities as boys.

Strategies to ensure that both girls and boys are encouraged to realise their full potential are important. Kedijang applauded the "Cell C Take a girl child to work" initiative, saying that girls are often prejudiced of learning opportunities because of gender imbalances within our societies. Another participant, Tsholofelo Kgosana, noted that empowering girls does not necessarily mean that boys should be ignored.

These young people also expressed a desire to create their own media in their respective provinces. They also wanted to feel they are part of the 'global village.' Internet has been able to link people from across the world. One can only communicate through the internet and surf it if they are 'internet literate.'

Gender Links ensured that these youths went through the steps of opening emails and communicating with other people. Thus began their journey into cyber-space. They are now able to do cyber-dialogues and engage in debates on the many issues affecting the world at large and South Africa in particular.

While the main aim of the course was to expose youth to the gender dynamics in the media, the course opened the youth's eyes to many other issues that South Africa faces, such as HIV/AIDS. As such, a moving digital photo story of Orange Farm's 'Let us Grow' project was done.

As our future leaders, youths have to be able to take a leading role in taking the media to task, create their own media and also raising awareness among other consumers. There should be a gradual shift from just being consumers of media to creators of media. Change can only be achieved when we have an enlightened citizenry.

**Writers Bio**
Sikhonzile Ndlovu is a researcher at Gender Links.


TOGETHER, WE'LL BE OK

Help, Hope, Healing – from Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse can happen to anyone – girls and boys, men and women. You don't have to deal with this on your own! Help is there for you, your family, and your friends.

Talk to someone as soon as possible!

You have a right to be helped

Talking makes a difference

What to do if someone tells you?

What to expect when going to the police?

Where to get help?

**In Practice: Together We'll be Ok - Children in Distress Network (CINDI)**

Founded in July 1996 and based in Pietermaritzburg, The Children in Distress Network (CINDI) brings together over 100 member organisations (NGOs, CBOs, government agencies and individuals) who collaborate in the interests of children affected or orphaned by HIV/AIDS. As a collection of independent initiatives, CINDI members retain individual character, flexibility and the ability to respond to individual children, but are strengthened and guided by their link to the Network. Members work together in clusters that allow close collaboration among members with expertise in a particular area to provide a continuum of HIV/AIDS care and support to beneficiaries. The clusters are a) Community Development Cluster (CD), b) Home-Based Care Cluster (HBC), c) Psychosocial Support/Schools and Youth Development Cluster (PSS), and d) Children-in-Care Cluster (CIC).

Over the last five years, members have reported their concern about the growing incidences of child sexual abuse, especially in rural areas where protection and support services are difficult to access. Consequently, members of the PSS Cluster decided to develop a guideline that would support and empower practitioners in the field – together with a companion poster for the local press.

*Process*

Various members of the Cluster pooled their knowledge and compiled the booklet (in English and isiZulu): "What to do when you or someone you know has been sexually abused"/iZinyathelo okumele uzithathe uma wena noma umuntu omaziyo ehlukemezeke ngokocansi." Staff from LifeLine and Rape Crisis, the Child Advocacy Centre, Childline, Umvoti AIDS Centre, Rob Smetherham Bereavement Service for Children, SAPS KZN Midlands FCS, Northdale Hospital Crisis Centre and Ethembeni gave freely of their time; the booklet was reviewed by Dr Neil McKerrow, Chief Specialist and Head of Paediatrics and Child Health, Pietermaritzburg and Metropolitan Hospitals Complex. The booklet was sponsored by Irish Aid, a donor partner of the CINDI Network. The poster, "Together, we'll be ok: Help, Hope, Healing – from Sexual Abuse," was compiled by Dr Neil McKerrow and Joan van Niekerk of ChildLine, designed by Hilary Kromberg Inglis of Jive Media and sponsored by the Mayor and Councillors of the Msunduzi City Council (Pietermaritzburg).

*Distribution*

The booklet and poster were launched on World AIDS Day, which is during the Sixteen Days of Activism. One thousand copies of the booklet were distributed to CINDI Members and the poster appeared in *The Witness* – the local daily newspaper with a circulation of 135 000. Both publications are also available freely on the CINDI website www.cindi.org.za.

*Next steps*

Demand for the booklet has been such that there are no copies left and it will be reprinted in March 2008, after a consultative review by members that will ensure that the 2nd edition includes any amendments and additions that they wish to see.

# New Media Technology & Activism



Cyber Dialogues in Zimbabwe *Credit: Gender Links*



# Impact of Social Media on Journalism

By Glory Mushinge

**Abstract**

This article addresses the relationship between social media and mainstream media. It discusses examples of how social media such as blogs sometimes complement or compete with traditional media in ways such as highlighting important events or issues that mainstream media misses or chooses not to explore, for example, such as those that relate to gender, thereby providing alternative voices, in that respect. The article also examines speculations about whether or not social media is indeed to an extent changing the way traditional publications/media operate, and also shows the similarities and differences in the way the two mediums behave, as well as the future of traditional media as social media emerge at a fast pace. It poses the question - will mainstream media withstand the dynamism of social media?

**Key words**

media, technology

## An information hungry world

The desire to have access to a host of relevant content is increasing in today's society, as people all over the world seek information by which they can make decisions. People want to be up-to-date with the goings-on around the globe, so that they do not remain behind in terms of opportunities, or are caught unawares in the event that a calamity occurs. In response to this desire, there is a considerable amount of information being generated in society, especially through new technologies such as the internet. Increased access to information fuels an even greater desire for more information about what is happening locally and globally.

While information generation and distribution has in the past been a preserve of players in certain professions such as journalism, today we see people that have never even seen the inside of a journalism classroom or newsroom developing content and sometimes commanding extremely high responses and attention from information fanatics who give feedback to their content. Content is being developed and distributed on the internet through virtual spaces such as blogs and this content varies from photos, to videos and music among others. This has come to be known as "social media."

**Definitions of social media**

There are various ways in which scholars, the media and others have defined social media. Buzzlogic Inc (2008) defines social media as "Web content such as blogs and wikis, created by individuals or a collaboration of individuals," saying that often social media content is intended as the starting point for larger conversations. The Chattered Institute of Public Relations (2007) defines it as, "the term given to websites and online tools which allow users to interact with each other in some way, by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests."

Blogs are perhaps the most known examples of social media, but the term encompasses many more platforms. More people are resorting to logging-in (on the internet) for information and entertainment, with virtual spaces such as Facebook seeing a lot of people signing up for fun, hooking up with old allies and even seeking possible employees, in the case of employers.

**Blogs Vs. mainstream publications**

With the advent of new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) such as the computer, internet, cell phones and all these internet applications, among other tools, many publications around the world are now claiming online presence by uploading the content of their print publications, or even broadcast content from radio and TV, onto their websites.

In addition, a significant amount of news and extra information is placed on individual and organisation blogs, creating a wide hub of information online. Audiences have the choice to either acquire the information from the blogs or even the news organisation's websites. When it comes to generation of news articles, bloggers too often produce news articles, some of which get more than adequate and positive feedback. Some segments of the media have observed that the industry has lost its monopoly on the news, because of the use of the internet (Gillmor 2006).

Now that it's possible to publish in real-time to a worldwide audience, a new breed of grassroots journalists are taking the news into their own hands. Armed with laptops, cell phones, and digital cameras, these readers-turned-reporters are transforming the news from a lecture into a conversation. Anyone can produce the news, using personal blogs, internet chat groups, email, and a host of other tools.

For example, blogs were used to transmit information about what went on during the Iraqi war in 2003, and sometimes what the blogs highlighted did not reflect in the mainstream media, hence blogs provided alternative voices during the war.

**The different forms of social media** (icrossing 2007)

***Social networks:*** these sites allow people to build personal web pages and then connect with friends to share content and communication. The biggest social networks are MySpace, Facebook and Bebo.

***Blogs:*** perhaps the best-known form of social media, blogs are online journals, with entries appearing with the most recent first.

***Wikis:*** these websites allow people to add content or edit the information on them, acting as a communal document or database. The best-known wiki is Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia that has over 2 million English language articles.

***Podcasts:*** audio and video files that are available by subscription, through services like Apple iTunes.

***Forums:*** areas for online discussion, often around specific topics and interests. Forums came about before the term 'social media' and are a powerful and popular element of online communities.

***Content communities:*** communities which organise and share particular kinds of content. The most popular content communities tend to form around photos (Flickr), bookmarked links (del.icio.us) and videos (YouTube).

***Microblogging:*** social networking combined with bite-sized blogging, where small amounts of content ('updates') are distributed online and through the mobile phone network. Twitter is the clear leader in this field.

An example of such a blog is Colby Buzzell (2004), who wrote about his experience during the Iraqi war, highlighting among other events the explosions in Iraq and how the United States army responded to that. The blog provides the reader with a different picture of what happened as the author writes in a more personal, narrative and descriptive way, which many people find easier to follow.

The honesty of this kind of writing makes readers want to resort to blogs from time to time in search of information, especially when it seems as if the mainstream media is not covering the issues thoroughly. This, to some extent, leads to some people thinking or suggesting that social media is overtaking traditional media and that maybe, in the future, the relevance of real journalism would be reduced.

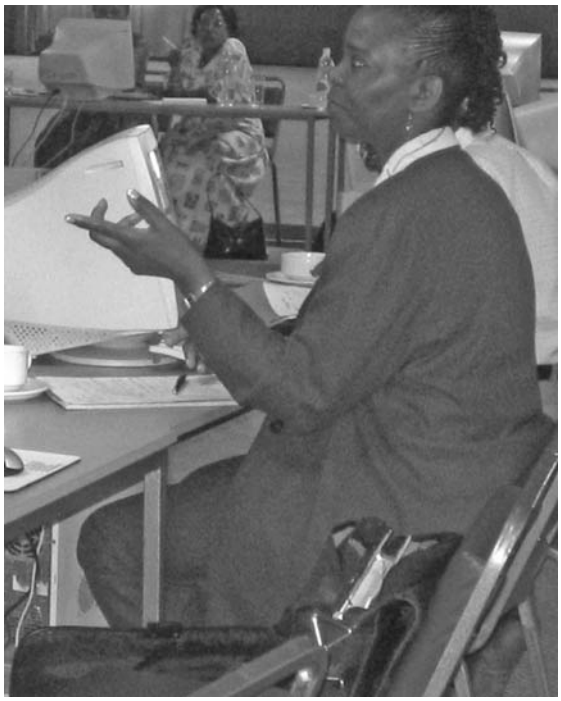
In *We the Media*, nationally acclaimed newspaper columnist and blogger Dan Gillmor tells the story of this emerging phenomenon and sheds light on this deep shift in how news is made and consumed. Gillmor shows how anyone can produce the news, using personal blogs, internet chat groups, email, and a host of other tools. He sends a wake-up call to newsmakers – politicians, business executives, celebrities – and the marketers and public relations people who promote them. He explains how to successfully play by the rules of this new era and shift from "control" to "engagement."

Gilmor makes a strong case to his fellow journalists that, in the face of a plethora of internet-fuelled news vehicles, they must change or become irrelevant. Journalism in the 21st century will be fundamentally different from the Big Media oligarchy that prevails today. (Gillmor 2006).

**Social media as a possible 'fifth estate'**

The growing dependence on social media by segments of society has partly come about because some people feel unsatisfied by the way the traditional media covers issues. Other people think the media either ignores important issues and usually concentrates on political issues or is biased in some areas of its reporting, and therefore resort to publishing their own ideas and problems, among other issues.

Some people think getting the information from blogs that are not restricted by publishing codes means they get the story as it is and not censored in any way. In her 2003 Harold Wolpe lecture, Jane Duncan stated that "another journalism is possible," even in the face of an increasingly convergent and commercialised global media. Quoting delegates at the conference on media and globalisation at the World Social Forum, Duncan refers to the emergence of a "fifth estate," alternative media networks created by social movements in order to remind the traditional, commercial media of their societal responsibilities. New social movements worldwide, according to Duncan, are also busy reclaiming the traditional media.



Cyber Dialogues allow people to discuss issues across borders
*Credit: Gender Links*

Increasingly, non-commercial media are on the agenda of social movements internationally. Free speech radio and television stations are being established as spaces for non-commercial journalism and a new layer of emerging grassroots media is springing up (Duncan, in H. Wasserman, 2005). Wasserman (2005) further quotes Duncan as having suggested that social movements in

South Africa for instance, are increasingly producing their own media to further their causes:

> She mentions newspapers and newsletters springing up, and suggests that micro-radio be further explored as a vehicle by these movements. Duncan does not mention the possibilities that the Internet might pose for South African social movements, although she does refer to Indymedia, an alternative media network that uses the Internet to great effect. Indymedia (www.indymedia.org), an international network of non-commercial journalists that also has a South African branch, similar networks like Civicus – an organisation distributing information about civil society activities to more than 4,500 subscribers all over the world (Civicus 2003) – and the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), a network linking other NGO networks, have used computer systems to amplify local struggles at relative low cost and with high speed across a global support system.

**Advantages of social media**

The nature of social media is that it tends to be more interactive as opposed to traditional media. Some of the best characteristics that make social media more interactive compared to traditional media include: participation, openness, conversation, connectedness and community (icrossing 2007):

- *Participation:* social media encourages contributions and feedback from everyone who is interested. It blurs the line between media and audience.
- *Openness:* most social media services are open to feedback and participation. They encourage voting, comments and the sharing of information. There are rarely any barriers to accessing and making use of content – password-protected content is frowned on.
- *Conversation:* whereas traditional media is about broadcast (content transmitted or distributed to an audience), social media is better seen as a two-way conversation.
- *Community:* social media allows communities to form quickly and communicate effectively. Communities share common interests, such as a love of photography, a political issue or a favourite TV show.
- *Connectedness:* Most kinds of social media thrive on their connectedness, making use of links to other sites, resources and people.

Icrossing (2007) observes that social media has become a big issue and the number of users is increasing rapidly with about "110 million blogs being tracked by 'Technocrati', a specialist search engine, up from 63 million at the beginning of the year [2007]."

> An estimated 100 million videos a day being watched on video sharing website, YouTube2. More than 200 million profiles created by users on social network MySpace3 (icrossing, 2007).

This to a large extent shows that indeed social media is commanding a significant amount of attention from viewers/audiences in society, especially a civil society that feels that the traditional media is not doing enough to represent issues that they stand for, a good example being the issue of gender equality and equity, and surrounding issues.

**Representation of gender issues**

The traditional media has for some time been condemned for the manner in which they have represented gender in their reporting. In parts of Africa such as Southern Africa, the way the media reports on gender issues is perceived as being biased, stereotyping the female gender and using women as objects of advertising, among other examples.

And so, civil societies in the Southern African community could be able to generate their own content that represent gender more positively, and in a manner that they see fit, through the creation of blogs, online discussion communities, etc. Virtual communities in cyberspace make it possible for such groupings to gain social power and consolidate their cultural identities in spite of societal constraints or geographical borders by producing and circulating their own knowledge (Arnold and Prymire in Wasserman 2005)

**The gap between the two – disadvantages to social media**

Is there enough reason to state that social media will indeed replace or eclipse traditional media? Some articles and papers that have come close to evaluating the way publications such as magazines will progress state that not much change will be made to magazines. Others observe that as much as individual-generated content such as that on blogs narrows the gap between blogs and mainstream publications; there are still differences that make these two entities in the information world independent of each other. On top of that, some argue that the lack of controls and professionalism around social media will limit its influence on traditional media.

Research associate at the Project for Excellence in Journalism, David Vaina (2007), attempts to provide an example of the different views/perceptions between blogs and mainstream media:

> According to William Dietrich, a writer with the Seattle Times Sunday magazine, the sacred purpose of the newspaper reporter 'is to fulfil an essential function of our democracy not just by disseminating information but also by analysing it, detecting patterns, spotting trends, and increasing societal understanding.' Indeed, bloggers may generate a more democratic Public Square, but can they facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of how political events are most likely to evolve, the Old Guard worries and wonders. In other words, Mill might not be enough.

As much as social media offers a platform for more alternative voices/views, and articles presented about different issues, much of the information that is produced refers so much to particular interest groups such as politics, environmental issues, etc.

Having browsed through the internet, this author has not found adequate fair reporting on some of the issues, such as "gender," that are perceived to be under-reported or misrepresented by the traditional media. What exists when it comes to gender representation by social media are online discussions as opposed to real articles. Also, as much as traditional media is condemned as being insensitive when it comes to reporting about gender issues, unfortunately social media, blogs in particular, which come close to journalism (by way of producing articles similar to the way newspaper/magazines do it), have to date not done much to surpass traditional media in reporting gender. In fact, blogs are also culprits in misrepresenting women.

An example is that while the traditional media exercises some form of censorship (either imposed or self-censorship) and will not, for instance, publish or broadcast material that is generally perceived to be offensive, such as nudity and vulgar language, some blogs upload such material online because they are not controlled. Individual bloggers choose to publish what they like and not all of them are responsible enough to avoid putting "offensive" content on their blogs or on their virtual spaces.

Therefore, although there may be close relationships between the ways journalistic pieces are done in mainstream media and social media such as blogs, the difference in practice between the two is likely to secure the continuous existence and credibility of traditional media.

Further, for African countries, where there are still many illiterate people who can not read or even access the internet due to inadequate infrastructure for ICTs and costs, dependence on mainstream media will continue for some time.

**The influence of social media on traditional media**

Despite the advantage of credibility that the traditional media has as the "watchdog of society'"and/or fourth estate, we cannot rule out possibility that it (the traditional media) has felt the pressure that has been brought about by social media. The fact is that as a result of this scenario the traditional media is mounting up its performance, so as to increase its visibility and presence in society and virtually.

Traditional media entities are currently visiting blogs, online discussion groups, etc., to see what is new that they can borrow from, in order to generate ideas for

news articles or find ways in which they could engage with their readers more – through making provisions for feedback, for example, and other workable practices carried by the social media.

From time to time, mainstream media relies on information generated by these blogs to get story ideas for future articles. No matter the extent to which the information on blogs is factual, Thomas Johnson and Barbara Kaye (2004) observe that it still sets a platform on which trained/professional journalists begin to discuss issues presented:

> Conversely, although journalists may perceive bloggers as 'wannabe amateurs, badly in need of some skills and editors,' they increasingly rely on blogs for story tips, information and access to stories from media throughout the world. Further, while many political blogs are written by armchair observers spouting their views, many journalists and some news organisations like MSNBC, host their own blogs.

## Conclusion

Against this background, it could be safe to suggest that as far as the development and distribution of information is concerned, people will never again rely on only traditional media to acquire information. They will continue to resort to consulting individually generated content (social media) such as blogs and this shows that social media is indeed playing an important role in alternative information provision to society.

However, the two types of media are currently operating from two different parameters and are unlikely to threaten the existence or originality of the other. Bloggers do borrow data from the traditional media, and vice versa, but differences occur when it comes to the way the two generate, distribute, receive and perceive information.

Social media content mostly thrives on opinions, while trained/professional journalists are said to uphold some ethics, thus rendering traditional media more reliable, compared to social media. Perhaps this also points to an additional need to understand and promote social media literacy.

If there is some change to talk about in the way publications are operating because of the emergence of social media, one thing that comes to mind is that social media is mostly being used as a reference point for further research and development of articles by mainstream publications. While social media is here to stay, so is traditional media, but the future will likely see continued melding of the two.

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**Writers Bio**

Glory Mushinge is a Zambian freelance journalist and columnist working with various media organisations, both locally and internationally. She specialises in ICT reporting and other development issues and has won awards in this area, the last one being in November 2006 as 'Top ICT journalist in Africa. A member (including holding leadership positions) of various media bodies in and out of Zambia, Glory is currently pursuing a Masters program in International Journalism at Cardiff university in the United Kingdom.



## Social Networks for Social Change: YAHAnet Goes Live

By Bronwen Low, Michael Hoechsmann and Claudia Mitchell, McGill University.



**Abstract**

Research points to the need for youth participation and leadership in HIV and AIDS prevention and education strategies. Internationally, youth-based organisations are drawing on the creativity and expertise of young people in arts-based initiatives aimed at promoting awareness, opening dialogue on issues such as on gender and sexuality, and discouraging stigma. YAHAnet is a webtool that supports and creates a virtual community of youth organisations around the world dedicated to using the arts and popular culture to address HIV and AIDS; it uses the internet's capacities to disseminate information, but also the emerging social networking aspects of the "Web 2.0" online environment.



**Key words**

arts, HIV/AIDS, technology, youth

> "'WE have to be the change we want to see in the world:' Young people should develop a global campaign for a culture of peace through their organisations and networks and use all forms of the Media to promote human rights and the respect for human dignity as fundamental values of the dialogue and establish a joint project of 'MEDIA FOR YOUTH.'" (UNESCO General Conference Youth Forum 2005)

Nowhere are these words from the fourth UNESCO youth forum more pertinent than in relation to the ways in which young people can be positioned as protagonists in addressing issues of HIV and AIDS. HIV and AIDS is recognised as a global crisis, particularly among youth, with half of all new infections world-wide affecting young people between the ages of 15 and 24 (UNAIDS 2006). Concomitantly, especially in the context of sub-Saharan Africa, there is often an overarching sense of AIDS fatigue. As one group of disadvantaged black youth just outside of Johannesburg expressed a few years ago, "AIDS, AIDS, AIDS, that's all we ever hear---we are sick of AIDS." Testament to how distinctly situated people's relationships are to the disease, another group from a more privileged private school about 20 km away

lamented, "AIDS, it has nothing to do with us. We are sick of AIDS" (Mitchell & Smith 2003).

Recent work on health promotion in the area of HIV and AIDS suggests the following. Unless youth are given a more significant voice in participating in policy dialogue about their own health and sexuality, and in producing and disseminating locally relevant and gender sensitive messages, prevention and awareness programmes organised "from the outside" (i.e., by adults, donors and so on) are doomed to failure (see, for example Ford, Oddalo & Chorlton 2003). Thus, an overarching concern is the place of youth engagement in keeping young people hopeful and "alive and on board'" as a strategy to ongoing involvement and awareness of prevention, treatment and care.

Such a position recognises that although young people are prone to risk behaviour and may fall victim to an invincible attitude that says, "it can never happen to me," they are simultaneously more likely to believe that *they* alone can make the change that will make a difference. Given the context, audience, and tools to communicate with, young people have proven over time the capacity and determination to speak out and make change (Hoechsmann & Low 2008). A vital alternative, then, to adults developing messages, campaigns, and prevention programmes directed at youth is to tap into the "let's do something" creativity of young people themselves through drama, drumming, chanting, forum theatre, hip hop, storytelling, puppetry, collage, graffiti, photography, video documentary, radio, writing, new media and so on (Gould 2004). As Eli Demanya of Salvage International (a Ghanaian non-governmental organisation that responded to the survey described below) argues, "We believe that the youth are not so ignorant. They know their problems and even have innovative ways of solving their problems. The challenge is that there have not been avenues for them to express these things." Critical across these various interventions is the engagement of young people as cultural producers in one way or another: whether writing their own prevention messages through graffiti, using photo-voice to tell their own stories of stigma, producing documentaries about getting tested, or performing their own dramas about sexuality and relationships.

As cultural producers, working to be directors of their own stories and destinies, youth have the potential to create an international community of youth activists with a tremendous capacity to address HIV and AIDS as a global phenomenon. At the same time, recent developments of the participatory functions of the Web 2.0 (the newer, more interactive functionalities of the internet) and its social networking functions can harness this energy and create forums for the sharing of information, tools, and experiences. In recognition of this vast potential, a network of educators has responded with the creation of YAHAnet (www.yahanet.org), a webtool designed to draw together and support youth organisations around the world dedicated to using some form of the arts to address HIV and AIDS. Funded in part through the Culture and HIV Division of UNESCO, YAHAnet is a partnership involving McGill University, the Centre for Visual Methodologies for Social Change, University of Kwazulu Natal, and GAAP (the Gendering Adolescence and Aids Prevention project), University of Toronto.

**Tapping the Potentials of the Web 2.0**

It might be said that the World Wide Web came of age when the social networking and data aggregating functionalities of the Web 2.0 platforms came into widespread use early in this new century. Naming "you" the Person of the Year for 2006, *TIME* magazine expressed the significance of the transformations to culture enabled by these new technologies and afforded by new creative uses of these tools:

> It's [2006] a story about community and collaboration on a scale never seen before… It's about the many wresting power from the few and helping one another for nothing and how that will not only change the world, but also change the way the world changes…We're looking at an explosion of productivity and innovation, and it's just getting started, as millions of minds that would otherwise have drowned in obscurity get backhauled into the global intellectual economy… (Grossman 2006, 14).



Youth produced media, such as photography, enables young people to share their own stories. *Credit: Centre for Visual Methodologies*

Prior to the Web 2.0 innovations, the internet was an effective multimodal communications vehicle, but not yet a revolutionary new vehicle for the collaborative production and dissemination of cultural products and forms. The transformation from the early versions of the Web to Web 2.0 was an evolution from a reading Web to a reading and writing Web, here understood to include all forms of multimodal cultural production. The new interactive properties of communication technology afforded by Web 2.0 innovations have enabled a corresponding shift in cultural development towards participatory forms. As Jenkins et al. (2006) point out in the MacArthur Foundation white paper, "interactivity is a property of the technology, while participation is a property of the culture."

In this new participatory environment, so-called "social networking" increasingly captures the imagination of youth worldwide. Regardless of its past in community activism, the term social networking has become the adopted and adapted term that describes web sites where people typically post a personal profile with thegoal of sharing it with others. MySpace and Facebook are basically virtual online scrapbooks, and YouTube is an online sharing site for streaming video, either home produced or media industry produced clips, old and new. While it is important to recognise the roots of social networking in other participatory forms, forums, and cultural practices, there is nothing wrong with celebrating the revitalised conditions for sharing enabled by new technological platforms. There is a tremendous range of social networking sites, some of which mobilise affinity groups and some of which enable cultural practices. Affinity groups might take the form of specific demographics (aboriginal people, women of colour, residents of a small town or village, etc.) or people with shared interests (fans of a television programme, adherents to a spiritual movement, etc.). Cultural practices sites centre on shared activities (hobby sites, activism sites, profession sites).

A common denominator across social networking



Expression comes in many forms *Credit: TIGXpress Project*

sites is a commitment to connecting with others to increase a virtual sense of community. The virtual relationship is very real to the participants despite the mediation of distance and technology. While there are privacy settings on v-log and blog sites that can limit who will be able to view or read a posting, this just means the poster is selecting to "narrowcast" to a limited audience. For the most part, only the number of internet users limits the audience setting for a given post. Youth are reading widely and writing to broad, often unknown audiences. Outside of one's local community and affinity groupings, the potential audience for a given piece can be limitless, albeit arbitrary. Moreover, many people can participate, even some who are differently abled and others without economic privilege. The learning curve involved for participation is modest. As learning economies rather than structured learning environments, social networking sites function through emulation and peer-to-peer support. There are no manuals to read, nor classes to attend. Pedagogy is just-in-time and task-oriented. Learning is networked, involving multiple learners with varying levels of expertise at multiple nodes, united by shared interests and goals.

**Enter YAHAnet**

YAHAnet - the Youth, the Arts and HIV and AIDS Network - was officially launched at the UNICEF Unite Against AIDS Concert held in Montreal in conjunction with World Aids Day events in December 2007. The site serves a number of different functions. It is a resource of materials both on the various art forms being used in addressing HIV and AIDS, along with areas of particular concern to organisations working in the arts (writing funding proposals, carrying out monitoring and evaluation). It also includes basic information about HIV and AIDS such as issues related to gender, stigma, and voluntary counselling and testing. Additionally, it holds a data bank on over 300 organisations with an online presence working in the area of the arts and HIV and AIDS, gallery space where individuals or groups can post their creative productions, and an interactive section called Test Your Knowledge. Under development is a section on the homepage that will feature a particular group or project. In addition, central to the focus of this article, a social networking function enables individuals and groups to become part of a virtual community of artists and activists.

YAHAnet builds on research carried out between December 2005 and March 2006, by a McGill team of faculty members, interns, and graduate students. We assessed the emerging community of youth groups in the field of arts-based approaches to addressing HIV and AIDS. After studying over 300 organisations with an on-line presence, in 45 developing and industrialised countries, it became clear that the groups use many creative approaches to HIV and AIDS prevention and education. We developed a typology chronicling details about each organisation and the kinds of approaches used. This included drama and performing arts such as forum theatre, street theatre, puppetry, dance, and storytelling; hip-hop culture and its facets of DJing, MCing, break-dancing, and graffiti art; photo-voice; radio documentary and drama; television; collaborative video and video documentary; writing and publishing magazines, newsletters, poetry, books and novels; and, visual arts such as painting and billboards; and websites.

The original research was followed up with a survey sent to many of the groups chronicled in the typology, which elicited responses from 47 individuals and organisations (the process also benefited from conversations with participants at the "HIV and AIDS - The Creative Exchange" workshop held in Nairobi in March 2007). The main objective of the survey was to find out more about each organisation, and to assess what each might look for in a web-based tool. To meet the latter objective we asked, "What sort of web-based tool do you think

would be most useful?" and "What kinds of things would you want it to include?" Interview respondents were very enthusiastic about the idea of a web-based tool that could help support the work of youth-based and youth-serving organisations using arts-based and participatory methodologies in HIV and AIDS prevention and education. Many offered detailed feedback on what kind of tool and functions would be of use. It became evident that these groups really wanted a community forum that would help to further their work.

In general, the web resource envisioned by our informants would serve educators and community-workers looking to initiate, develop, fund, assess, and revitalise programming, as well as youth who are looking for information and a place to share thoughts and feelings. This would be a site that would inform, support, connect, encourage, and advocate. Participants variously described their ideal web tool as a multi-faceted information data-bank, a showcase, a networking space, a community centre, a curricular resource, a source of inspiration, and a site for dialogue and artistic expression. We grouped these aspirations into four categories, and YAHAnet works to reflect each one.

*Information data-base*

Respondents asked that a good deal of the site function be to store a range of types of information, which could be regularly (and so easily) updated. A number of respondents expressed interest in knowing more about what others were doing, and in publicising their own work. For instance, Robin Opperman at Umcebo Trust (South Africa) suggested the site might be "something that directed interested people to our projects, so that they could come to know about us, support us and work with us." This need is met in part by the site's typology of existing organisations, individuals, and projects around the world. In our plans for the site, the typology will eventually be accessed and cross-indexed by elements such as region, type of art-based methodology, and funding source. YAHAnet also works to include other information survey respondents were interested in, such as: an up to date and comprehensive list of all of the research in the area; publication of conferences, events, and education opportunities; and, media clips, relevant news and data, and regional information (for some of this, see site's "HIV and AIDS in the news" function). Many respondents requested directories of donors with web-links, and information about funding networks and entities, given the importance and challenge of securing funding. As Blendi Dibra, coordinator of the Albanian Youth Parliament, emphatically states, "we work in North Albania and there is a lack of information and we have asked for help several times for other qualified projects and also to support our work, but due to lack of possibility to exchange information and attract potential partners we could not do more!"




Caption: Youth are a vital part of addressing HIV/AIDS
*Credit: Gender Links*

*Show case*

The site's "gallery function" is a direct response to respondents who suggested the site feature a selection of projects which demonstrate some "best practices" and/or are case studies and that include narrative accounts of the programme contexts, methodologies used, experiences, challenges and lessons learned. For instance, Opperman hoped the site would highlight "a wide variety of projects, with lots of visuals, so that people can see the work almost first hand. We need to tell people about what we are doing, and inspire them to become involved." Christian Heppinstall of the Alaskan AIDS Assistance Association uses theatre as an educational medium. He expressed an interest in seeing and sharing photos of actors working. The gallery is a repository for images, video, and music, and site members are encouraged to upload relevant materials, which are "featured" on a rotating basis.

*Educational resources*

Many respondents called for easily downloadable guides on working with youth using arts-based and participatory methodologies. Specifically requested were summaries of prevention strategies, brochures, samples of artwork, and steaming or downloadable video and audio resources. This call comes in part in response to shortages of materials in rural and developing contexts; for instance, Adaramola S. Emmanuel of the Emmanuel World Children Foundation in Nigeria highlighted the importance of resources which could be packaged into an audiovisual show for rural communities. Emmanuel Fonyuy of the TechCeFaCos Group would like information in a format one could "easily edit and develop in to a booklet to assist developing world countries such Cameroon, which have just introduce Arts and Craft (as National Culture) in to their Basic Education School System and is on a poor stage due to lack of basic arts textbooks etc." The site's "tool kits" of facts on HIV and AIDS and on arts-based methodologies fulfil some of these needs, and can be downloaded as PDF files.

*Networking and communication space*

The YAHAnet group – especially the youth interns who have been working on the project -- had a strong sense from the beginning that the web tool could offer an important space of sharing and connection for an international collection of groups doing their work in relative isolation. The process of constructing the typology of organisations around the world confirmed the widespread, grassroots use of arts-based, participatory methods in HIV and AIDS education, and a significant number of our survey respondents expressed the need for networking, communication, and exchange through online "discussion forums," "supportive clubs," and "chats." For example, Pilar Bobadillo (Asociació'97n de Comunicadores Sociales, Calandria) said, "Of course, we are interested on sharing our experiences and methodologies. One of our goals is to promote exchange of experiences, and methodologies in order to make synergy and improve the HIV and AIDS response, using information and communication technologies." Opperman of the Umcembo Trust is also interesting in directing interested people to their project, "so that they could come to know about us, support us and work with us."

Communication spaces were seen as necessary for young people as well as those working in organisations; Demanya, for instance, hoped the site could give youth the opportunity to "express themselves freely about their thoughts, fears and hopes on HIV/AIDS. There should be room for them to seek confidential counselling on environment pressures they are facing i.e. economical, social." The argument for the inclusion of this kind of 'free expression' space in the context of HIV and AIDS is compelling, for as organisations such as Lovelife in South Africa and yfm (a kwaito radio station in Johannesburg) have found, the "space" of AIDS is not one that is easily compartmentalised. Youth-friendly arts and new media initiatives can go a long way toward serving such a function.

The intention of YAHAnet is to combine the functionalities of Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 platforms, part static resource library and part dynamic social network domain. The importance of developing and augmenting the social networking functionalities of the site became increasingly clear through our user testing process. In particular, the group of student interns at McGill working on the project made a strong case for the need for greater interactivity after they tested early versions of the site. They argued that over the course of the site's development online social networking sites such as Facebook and My Space had become ubiquitous in many settings and that their interactive potential should be incorporated into the project. Ultimately, it became apparent that much of what the survey respondents were requesting could be enabled through a "social networking" function, and that the success of YAHAnet in creating an online community depended on providing members a space to mount and share distinct profiles showcasing their work and identity. This, in turn, raised further questions about access and use given the material realities of emergent digital divides.

**Bridging the Divide**

Many express concerns over digital divides that reproduce historic patterns of exclusion, concerns that we share. Furthermore, we acknowledge the challenge ushered forth by Jenkins et al. in the MacArthur white paper: Access must include instruction in the use of the new

tools and the opportunity to engage in the same type of play that the digital-haves engage in when learning a new platform or protocol. The notion that great repositories of information and knowledge should be created only to benefit those with access to digital networks and experience in their effective use, flies in the face of that which we hope to implement in this community-building exercise of developing and sustaining a network of practitioners and participants of arts-based and participatory methodologies for social change. And it is particularly troubling that one cannot advance participatory methodologies and practices without universal access to the tools that we wish to share.

As access continues to improve, we hope that resources such as YAHAnet are at the forefront of a meaningful engagement by marginalised groups with the rich potentials of the participatory Web. 2.0. Given the potential of Web 2.0 for creating meaningful international communities and partnerships, we remain committed to the possibilities of webtools such as YAHAnet, while cognisant of its current limitations, and to the need to continue working in the fight against HIV and AIDS from many fronts and places. In the words of survey respondent Okesandra Sluzhynska of the "Art anti AIDS" Foundation in the Ukraine, "There are no borders for AIDS. There are no borders for joint efforts to prevent it."

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**Writers Bio**

Bronwen Low is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education at McGill University. In her research she explores the implications and challenges of popular youth culture for curriculum theory, literacy studies, and pedagogy. She is currently working with community-based educators and activists in Montreal who draw upon Hip-Hop culture and media production in work with youth. She recently published Reading Youth Writing (Lang, 2008) with Michael Hoechsmann.

Michael Hoechsmann is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education at McGill University. His research interests are in the areas of media, new media, literacy, new literacies, youth, cultural studies and education. For four years, he was the Director of Education of Young People's Press, a non-profit news service for youth 14-24 <www.ypp.net>.

Claudia Mitchell is a James McGill Professor in the Faculty of Education and Honorary Professor in the School of Language, Literacies, Media and Drama Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal. Her research interests include visual and arts based participatory methodologies, youth, sexuality and HIV and AIDS, girlhood studies, and teacher identity.



# Mobile Activism or Mobile Hype ?

By Firoze Manji

**Abstract**

Technology offers many opportunities, yet the push to bridging the digital divide and harnessing the power of information and communication technology often neglects the very resource that is most central to development – people. Experience demonstrates that while technology may provide tools that people can use, it should not be over-rated as the solution to every problem. Based on two experiences using mobile phones in Africa to address women's rights and social development, the key lesson learned is that mobile phones, like the pen or paper, are only as useful as one part of a strategy in which people must remain at the forefront.

**Key words**

technology, mobile phones, poverty

## Mobile phones in context

Every time a new technology comes along, everyone swears this will bring about social progress. All kinds of amazing qualities are attributed to the technology. Those living in poverty - especially in Africa - are the justification for investment and spending huge amounts. We have seen this with the supposed values of the green revolution proposed by the Gates and Rockefeller Foundations (even though most of us suspect that Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) is but a Trojan horse for the entry for the use of genetically modified technologies). In addition, we have seen this with mobile phones. What would people do without the poor in Africa to justify their latest ventures!

Two experiences from Fahamu involving the use of mobile phones in Africa show that the principle lesson learned about using mobile, or any other kind of technology, is that it is people, not technology, that make history. People bring about development as social progress.

**Case 1: Campaign for the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa**.

In November 2003, the African Union (AU) adopted the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa at its summit in Maputo, Mozambique. This Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's rights was the outcome of some 10 years of patient work by the African women's movement to establish an indigenous, organically developed Protocol that would advance the position of

women and provide some level of protection of the rights of women in Africa. However, to come into force, at least 15 countries had to sign and ratify the Protocol.

By March 2004, only one country had ratified - The Comoros. A number of organisations met in Nairobi to plan the development of a campaign around the Protocol. To support this work, Fahamu offered to run a series of articles in Pambazuka News. We also planned to publish special issues of Pambazuka News for distribution at the AU Summit in Addis Ababa. A call was made to establish a coalition to push for the ratification of the Protocol and in September 2004, the "Solidarity for African Women's Rights" was established comprising some 15 organisations.

To promote the Protocol, the coalition initiated an online petition to enable people to show their support of the Protocol. In recognition of the fact that, at the time, an estimated 80 million mobile phones were in use in Africa, and SMS was a popular means of communication, the petition also included an option for people to sign by sending an SMS to a specified number. To promote the petition, the campaign included the production of leaflets, distribution of information via the internet and mailing lists, and through newspapers.



Super connected? *Credit: GCIS*

This campaign received a huge amount of publicity, mostly because of the innovation of the advocacy techniques. The campaign to get the petition signed included special issues and features in Pambazuka News, systematic articles in newspapers and patient lobbying at the AU Summit meetings, including the awarding of red, green and yellow cards to countries that had ratified, signed or failed to sign, respectively. So successful was the lobbying and advocacy work that by November 2005, two years after the initial adoption of the Protocol by the AU, the requisite 15 countries had ratified, and the Protocol came into force on 23 November 2005. This was widely hailed as the fastest ratification process of any international instrument in the history of Africa.

Technically, the creation of the system to log the calls was a relatively simple exercise. The SIM for the phone to which messages were sent was connected to a computer and the phone numbers and messages stored on the SIM were then transferred to a simple database. The originating country of the message was detectable from the country code of the sender's phone. Once the data was on a database, it was relatively easy to display the contents on a website.

The use of mobile technologies was not without its challenges. The number that people were required to call was not a simple number. There were no facilities for establishing a short-code number, and at the time, the only place possible to set up the system was by using a South Africa number.

This created a number of problems. The costs of SMS from some networks to this number were charged at a higher rate. In some cases, it was not possible to send a text message across a competitor's network. In addition, in other cases - for example, during the lobbying interventions in Addis Ababa at the AU Summit, it was not possible to send messages out of Ethiopia at the time as the Ethiopian government had not legalised SMS

transmissions out of the country! These acted as real impediments to the campaign to solicit signatures to the petition via mobile phones.

Any e-mail user is well aware of the problems of spam emails, yet this is nothing compared to the phenomena of spam SMS. Many people appeared to have nothing better to do than to send - presumably at vast expense - spam messages to the phone number. In addition, there were those who took the opportunity to send abusive messages. Inevitably, there were those who sought to pour out sexual attacks on women and the women's movement. Originally, an automated system displayed all messages on the website, but it was soon apparent that this was not going to work: every message needed vetting and approval.

A facility was also available for people to be able to opt in to an SMS update. Those who subscribed to this service received regular updates via SMS about the latest achievements of the campaign.

The campaign got a huge amount of publicity because of the fact that many newspapers and magazines noticed the use of mobile phone technologies. There were newspaper articles, reports in magazines, interviews on radio and television. Fahamu got a great deal of publicity and recognition as a "pioneer."

When it came to evaluating the impact of this initiative, the question arose – had the campaign been a success. Yes, decidedly.

The question was then posed - what criteria do you use to evaluate the success of a mobile phone campaign? Do you count the number of messages received? Have you developed particular criteria for this kind of initiative?

The answer to this was as follows: in any initiative, you need to evaluate success in relation to the outcome that you were seeking at the start. The campaign did not aim to get many text messages; its goal was to persuade 15 governments to ratify the Protocol, which it did successfully.

The use of mobile phones for this campaign was strictly a means to an end not an end in itself. In all, the campaign collected 3391 signatures to the petition. Of these, at least 10 came from organisations with membership in the hundreds, and one from an organisation that had more than 1000 members. However, only 454 of these signatures came via SMS. Thus, the total number of text messages was small.



Cell phones, another communication tool

*Credit: Colleen Lowe Morna*

The impact of the campaign had nothing to do with the number of SMS messages, but by virtue of the "news value" of the initiative. It proved, as expected, a successful way of getting attention to the campaign.

The important lesson learned is that had everyone else been using mobile phones for advocacy campaigns, the strategy would not have had as much publicity. Consequently, the impact of the initiative would have been much smaller.

**Case 2: The UmNyango Project**

This project sought to explore the extent to which mobile phone technologies could promote and protect the rights

of rural women in the province of KwaZulu Natal (KZN), South Africa. It was carried out by a consortium of civil society organisations (CSOs) including Fahamu, Indiba Africa Alliance, Centre for Public Participation, Community Land and Rural Development Centre, Domestic Violence Assistance Project, Participatory Development Initiative, and Rural Women's Movement.

KwaZulu Natal is a province identified as having a widespread prevalence of domestic violence against women and a growing number of landlessness amongst women. Baseline surveys in five communities in the province showed that:

- more than 30% had witnessed domestic violence;
- 33% of respondents (all women) reported that they had been excluded from accessing and/or the control of land due to them;
- 54% had experienced conflict in their communities particularly around stock theft, land and politics; and
- interestingly, 83% of those living in these communities owned mobile phones, and 80% indicated that they know how to send and receive SMS.

The project established an SMS gateway through which messages could be distributed to all those enrolled in the project, and it enabled every individual to send messages to the organisers and to the local paralegal officers where they needed assistance with regard to any incidence of violence or threat to their access to land.

The aim was to examine the potential of mobile phone technologies to:

- enhance potential for participation in regional national, provincial and local government initiatives, which impact on rural livelihoods and development (including receiving, amongst other things, relevant headlines from Pambazuka News);
- contribute to overcoming the patrimonial challenges that make the reporting of violence against women virtually impossible;
- enable women greater access to information on unconstitutional preclusion to land as well as land evictions and to allow them to report on such unconstitutional conduct;
- enhance participation in the early reporting of political tensions and violence;
- enhance access to justice; and
- test the feasibility of using podcasting technology to disseminate relevant information from Pambazuka News in IsiZulu



Rural women at one of eighteen workshops organised during the campaign. *Credit: Anil Naidoo*

While all participants received training to use SMS, the majority of them were not inclined to use SMS to request information nor to report incidences to anyone. Instead, women chose to make direct contact with the paralegal offices in their location. They all knew about the help that they would be able to get from such offices because of a series of face-to-face workshops held during the course of the project. In fact, some 418 women and 316 men attended 18 workshops held in the area. There was a doubling of the number of cases, especially of gender-based violence, reported during the project period as compared with the preceding period, an increase that was not observed in the non-project areas of KwaZulu Natal.

In practice, the project found SMS to be prohibitively expensive, despite the fact that some level of subsidy was provided by the project towards the cost of SMS. There was no evidence that SMS led to any enhanced participation in local, regional or national government initiatives, and any such activity was attributable only to the workshop-based initiatives organised by the project. SMS was not used to report gender-based violence, and there was no evidence that it was used to improve access to information or to actions against preclusion of women from land, or in relation to any kind of conflict resolution. There was significant evidence that the project had an impact on access to justice, but no evidence that this was a result of any aspect of mobile phone technology.

With the assistance of CMFD (Community Media for Development) Productions, the project was able to run a workshop on developing podcasting during which 8 women developed a podcast based on their own ideas, interviewing, editing and broadcasting. However, this development had no relationship at all to mobile phone technology. It was a valuable experience, and our hope is that the women involved will have gained the confidence to develop materials for their own ends.

We had planned to examine whether SMS technologies could be an effective tool to enhance political participation and to enable women to both report on and organise around domestic violence and land exclusions. However, our pilot project suggests that this is fraught with problems, especially in the context of the fact that this was not demand-driven by the communities that were involved, and because SMS technology as a tool is an expensive method of communicating.

Indeed, had the funds been allocated to supporting women in other ways to organise and seek redress, the outcome would have been more positive than if we had spent the effort and resources in setting up, administering and sending SMS messages.

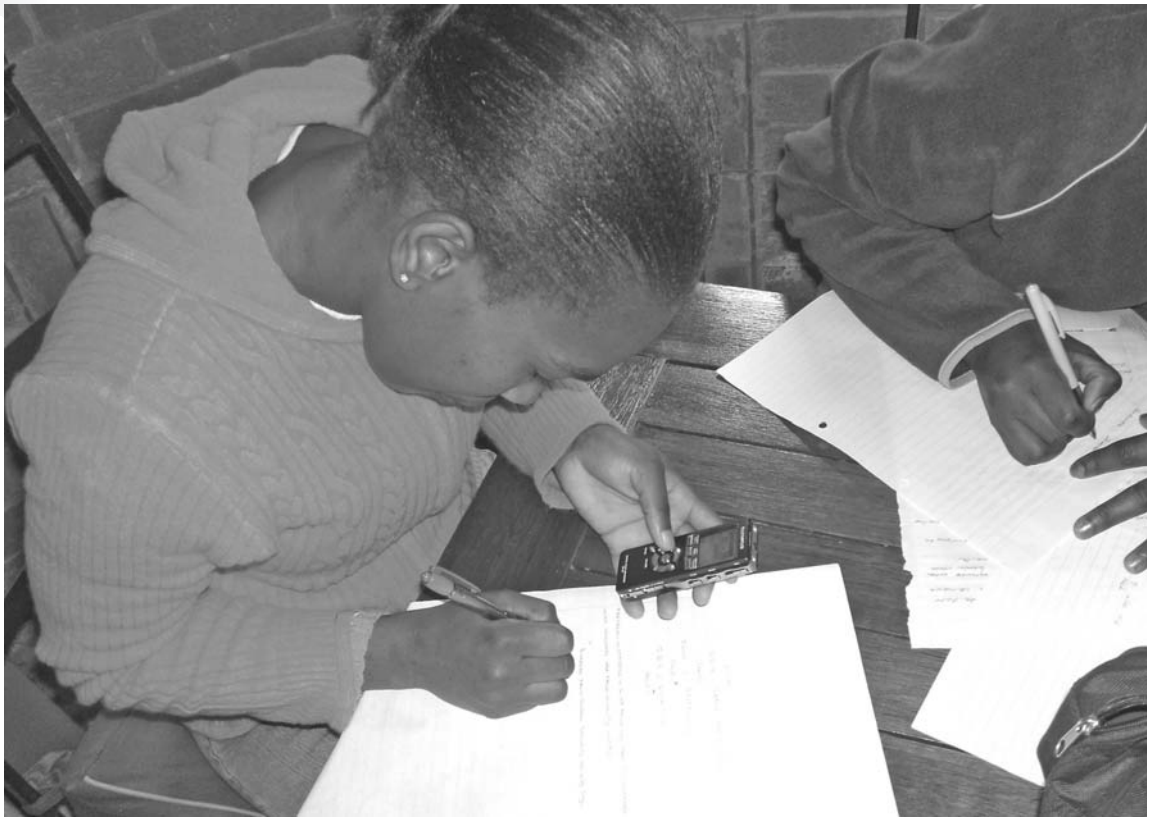
Our recommendation would be that the use of SMS might at best be a complement to social organising rather than as the central part. This conclusion may not be very popular with those who want to promote the use of SMS, and that may be perceived in going against the current fashions about the "sexiness" of mobile phone technologies.

However, this pilot study does demonstrate that there is no substitute for human social and political organising, and technical tools are just that – tools. And to be effective in achieving social justice, the right tools need to be used for the right purpose. This pilot project has allowed us to learn these lessons empirically.

**Why all this hype about mobile phones?**

Why are we not holding conferences about the role of the pencil in development? Or the role of paper? There is more evidence of social progress made by these humble instruments than all the information and communication technologies (ICTs) over the last 20 years.

Pencils and paper can be used to write tracts such as the Pedagogy of the Oppressed, The Wretched of the Earth. However, they are also used to write Mein Kampf. There is nothing intrinsically progressive about the pencil or paper. It depends on who uses it and for what purpose.



Ayanda Ngwenya transcribes interviews during podcast workshop. *Credit: Deborah Walter*

The problem lies in the very nature of the question that is regularly asked: do ICTs or mobile phones contribute to "development?" The term development implies social progress, liberation of humanity from oppression. However, in practice, development has come to mean what real estate businesses mean by development: an opportunity for profiteering, where the haves get the benefits while the have-nots are driven further from the possibility of eking out an existence.

In that sense, and only in that sense, mobile phones have played a significant role in development – enabling a minority to get rich quick and the expense of the poor.

Mobile phones, after all the hype, are like pencils, tools for communication (although perhaps the pencil allows deeper reflection than the irritating ring of the mobile). Like all technologies, tools do not themselves do anything.

They are inanimate objects. Like all technologies, what effect a tool has depends who has control and what purpose it is used for. Tools have potentials for social progress as well as social regression. We need to focus on the power of those who have control over the technologies and question their use of these technologies. Technologies are not neutral: they reflect the power of those who have control of them.

There is a real need to question the values and morals of those who are obsessed about the role of technologies. For example, just as Mwai Kibaki organised what was effectively a coup d'etat in Kenya, the Daily Nation's Andrew Limo wrote about "How electronic technology helped to boost election campaigns" (http://www.nationmedia.com/dailynation/nmgcontent entry.asp?category_id=25&newsid=113519). The article described in celebratory terms the amazing

contribution that technology had made - without any comment at all on whether the technology actually ensured proper monitoring of the electoral process. In practice, SMS was used widely to send out hate mail across the country. Here are examples of the kind of messages that were circulated at the time:

a) "We, as the Gikuyu, Embu and Meru communities, possess six million votes. You want us to be ruled by an uncircumcised people [Luo people] and go back to the jobless corner? Come out in large numbers to re-elect President Mwai Kibaki so that the country is not ruled by an uncircumcised man who will make the Kikuyus wear shorts. Circulate this message to five or more members of the Gikuyu, Embu and Meru communities. Your vote is the one that will prevent us from going back to Egypt."
(Received as an SMS, and written in Kikuyu)
b) "Under Kalonzo's government, sex will be legalized and free."
(Received as an SMS, and written in Kikuyu)
c) "Why you should be in ODM! ODM women scream YAWA, YAWA, YAWA, in praise of NYUNDO while men in PNU are busy telling their wives to PANUA ile kazi iendelee (spread your legs so that work may continue). Women in ODM-K are so wet that their men keep asking WAPI WHIPPER! (where is the Whipper)"
(Received through SMS, written as it is, minus translations, targeted both at women as a group and also at PNU and ODM-K political parties)
d) "May God protect you from all the harms of the devil, including diseases, thieves, fleas, ticks, weevils, lice, bedbugs, and especially, ODM."
(Received as an SMS, written in Kikuyu, and sent through cell-phones)
e) "We as Kalenjin Community would like to inform the Kikuyu who live here at Solai (in Rift Valley) to immediately leave the farms you occupy or else we warn you that we shall attack you forcefully anytime."
(Received at EMRC as a leaflet, written in Kiswahili, and signed as "Jamii ya WaKalenjin" (Kalenjin Community)
Source: Kenya Human Rights Commission: Violating the Vote: A Report on the 2007 General Elections

used mobile phone technologies for people who witness acts of violence in Kenya in post-election period. Individuals are able to report incidents that they have seen, and it appears on a map-based view for others to see. This has been a really valuable and successful initiative. However, its success has been a function not so much of the technology, but more importantly of the fact that the initiative came from those who have an intimate connection with the human rights and other social activists who trust Ushahidi and with whom they have a common agenda. In other words, this initiative has worked because of the underlying social relations ... or put it another way, the technology was essentially a manifestation of those underlying social relations.

The widespread availability of mobile phones in Africa epitomises the neo-liberal agenda of privatisation. From the 1980s, the international finance institutions, accompanied by the chorus of "donor" agencies, imposed upon African countries a set of economic and social polices that became known as structural adjustment programmes, the heart of which involved forcing the state to disinvest from public services, and selling of the commons to the private sector. From the early 1980s onwards, there was almost no state investment in health, education, agricultural development, housing, roads, infrastructure and communications. The developing telephone infrastructure was a major victim of this, with old and decrepit infrastructure that the state telecommunications industry had falling into further decline over the following 20 years. Having reduced the market value of such services, the structural adjustment programmes ensured that the private sector could buy these off at rock bottom prices. The way was then open for the private telecommunications sector, with the emergence of mobile phone technologies, to be the principal supplier of telecommunications.

There are those who would argue that mobile phone companies are progressive because they have enabled communications where there is none. These same people worship the market place as the ultimate tool for social progress. There is much hype about the number of mobile phones available in Africa – said to be currently in the region of 120 million. However, this figure is more

in need of an explanation than explaining anything itself. It says nothing of the gender distribution nor indeed about the class distribution. It is common amongst the middle classes of the both urban and rural populations to have two or more mobile phones each.

The reality is that what is developed and who gets access to what is determined not by social need but by the voracious appetite for profit. What all these debates side step is that there is no democratic control over the use or access to these technologies. In the neoliberal age, citizens are gelded to become only consumers. They influence the market only as consumers. The extent of their influence is determined primarily by their power to consume. And of course, the have-nots, by definition don't have the power to influence. All the basic gains of the centuries of struggles for democracy where decisions are made on the basis of one person one vote, not on the basis of how much wealth one owns, have been reversed. Neoliberalism has returned us to rules of the old order where those with wealth get the vote, the rest of us become mere spectators of history.

In capitalist societies, all technologies have the potential for magnifying and amplifying social differentiation. It is only through the imposition of the democratic will of citizens can this inherent tendency of technologies be overcome. Mobile phone technologies are no exception. Our studies have shown that there is more hype than impact with respect to the role of mobile phone technologies and social progress for the most disenfranchised.

**Writers Bio**
Firoze Manji is director of Fahamu - Networks for Social Justice (www.fahamu.org) and co-editor of Pambazuka News (www.pambazuka.org)




Community communication in Sharpeville, South Africa. *Credit: Trevor Davies*

# Media and Elections/ Governance



At the polls in Mauritius *Credit: Gender Links*



# Wailing Women, Marching Men: The Paradox of Women in the Post-Election Kenyan Press

By Simiyu Barasa

**Abstract**

After the post election ethnic violence broke out in Kenya following the disputed presidential election results on 29 December 2008, the recurring imagery in the press was that of women suffering and wailing. From the print to audiovisual sector, women appear as the images of victimisation, but the stories are about the leaders hawking war. During times of conflict, the media shows women as subordinated persons. In the case of the reportage of the Kenyan violence, one can go further to see how such imaging of women is manipulated to push certain agendas and the various contradictions when the media presents women as victims, yet makes them invisible in the attempts to seek peace and solve the conflict. While women are victims of the violence in the pages of the print media, voices in the radio and footage in TV News, men have more prominence in the articulation of violence.

**Key words**

elections, violence, media

## Media in Kenya

The Kenyan media scene has been booming since the 1990s liberalisation of the sector that was synonymous with the advent of multi-party democracy. Until then, the television and radio sectors had been controlled by the state, with the Voice of Kenya (later to be renamed Kenya Broadcasting Corporation) being the sole television and radio station. Mainstream newspapers were, and still are, *The Nation* and *Standard* newspapers. The freeing of the airwaves brought about new television stations, with the leading ones now being KTN, NTV and Citizen TV. FM radio stations have exploded, with major ones with a national reach (Kiss, Classic, Capital, Easy, Metro, Citizen, KBC English Service, KBC Swahili, BBC, Hot 98) and tens of others which are regional and broadcasting in vernacular. As these stations bloomed under the banner of media freedom brought about by democracy, the women's rights movement also became more visible and active, networking with the mass media and at times clashing in the course of activism.

In the run up to the 2007 December General Elections, the women's rights movement in Kenya considerably argued and successfully lobbied media houses to refocus their representation of women both as voters and as seekers of electoral positions. Almost all advertisements urging for peace to prevail during the election period

were characterised by images of women. During the clamour for a new constitution in the late 1990's, the political class had invented the mythological "Wanjiku" (a name for a girl in Gikuyu, one of the Kenyan tribes) to represent the voice of the downtrodden local *mwananchi* (ordinary citizen). Everything perceived to be for the elite was attacked as not being considerate of Wanjiku. As the 2007 elections came in, the voice of Wanjiku was resuscitated again and the prevailing government accused of not factoring Wanjiku (the common citizen) in their agenda. Images of women in impoverished conditions aimed to show that economic development figures had actually not translated to better lives for ordinary Kenyans. The government in turn used images of women with healthy looking babies on their backs drawing water from taps while fat looking cows grazed in the background to show how Kenyans were "smiling" at the good life that had been brought by the government.

Gender-based violence directed to women candidates was high in visibility, leading to its condemnation. Any time a woman candidate suffered assault, the women's rights movement joined hands and visited the survivors in hospital, complete with a battery of press people, and loudly protested such actions. Foreign ambassadors were also present using such press briefings to comment on the rising violence. Unfortunately, it also highlighted how "successful" such violence can be in public humiliation of female candidates, making criminal elements refocus on it as a tool or political tactic. Whether the high number of reported cases of violence against women candidates was because of more women seeking political posts, or much more media attention on such crimes when previously they were unreported, or as a rise in opponents using it as a political tool of choice, remains debatable. The reality is that gender violence was so high during last year's election campaign period that the police Commissioner, Maj. Gen. Ali, publicly stated that his force would give women political candidates special security.

On voting day, images of long queues with old women patiently waiting their turn characterised stories about how high the voter turnout was, that even elderly women had come out to vote. All this imaging continued until the presidential results started being delayed by the Electoral Commission of Kenya. The images of women (used to insinuate peace) disappeared, replaced by images of men shouting aggressively at the Electoral Commission of Kenya Chairman Mr. Samuel Kivuitu, of uniformed male Paramilitary Police, and men punching their fists in the air as they danced around torched cars and buildings. The headlines used keywords like "Stand Off, Chaos, Delays Spark Angry Protests," and such antagonistic words.

On 29 December 2007, amid outbreak of violence in some parts of Kenya ostensibly as a result of the delayed results, the wide lead that the opposition leader Raila Odinga had over the incumbent, Mwai Kibaki, narrowed suddenly and in a couple of hours Kibaki was declared the winner and hurriedly sworn in. Kenya erupted into what became a tribal war, with ethnic groups maiming, killing and burning properties of opposing ethnic groups within their territories, to "finish them off" or exile them back to their ancestral land.

In the first week of the outbreak, there was very little representation of women in the media. More visible were images and stories of mobs of men waving machetes, clubs, and assorted crude weapons while singing blood curdling war cries. In the background, burning shops and looted business premises were visible, or billowing smoke. The areas covered were Kisumu City, Eldoret and Mombasa City, strong opposition areas. The immediate interpretation by the media was that of destruction of property as "people protested the controversial elections that were allegedly rigged." When the Kenya Assemblies of God Church in Eldoret was torched with 35 refugees burnt alive in it on 1 January 2008, the focus soon turned to portraying the violence as ethnically motivated. Figures of the dead started popping up, and six digit figures of those on forced migration. Still little mention of the women.

When Dr Sam Thenya of the Nairobi Women's Hospital called for a press conference and highlighted the fact that the hospital was receiving double the average number of daily rape cases and even some from much farther areas than usual, the media refocused their attention.

5 January saw newspapers carry photos of Desmond Tutu saying a Kibaki-Raila power sharing deal was possible, while the photo of a woman with her twins at the refugee camp in Nakuru drove the point home that the country needed healing. More images appeared of women breastfeeding children in desolate conditions in the camps while men ran from teargas canisters lobbed by police.

The following day the *Daily Nation* front page showed a three-picture sequence of a group of robbers attacking a woman as she alighted from a *matatu* (public service vehicle) in Kibera and robbing her of her shopping. Under the question if it is hunger or pure lawlessness that led the men to that act, it goes ahead to say the "country has been in near anarchy over the election dispute all week." This was the beginning of media coverage of the plight of ordinary citizens in the violence, as opposed to the previous days where attention had primarily been on the face off between Kibaki's and Raila's presidency claims.

While giving the crisis in figures, *Daily Nation* said 199 killed, 1,000 arrested, 179,000 evicted from home, and with the story the icon of a woman feeding a hungry child in a camp for displaced people. This was to show



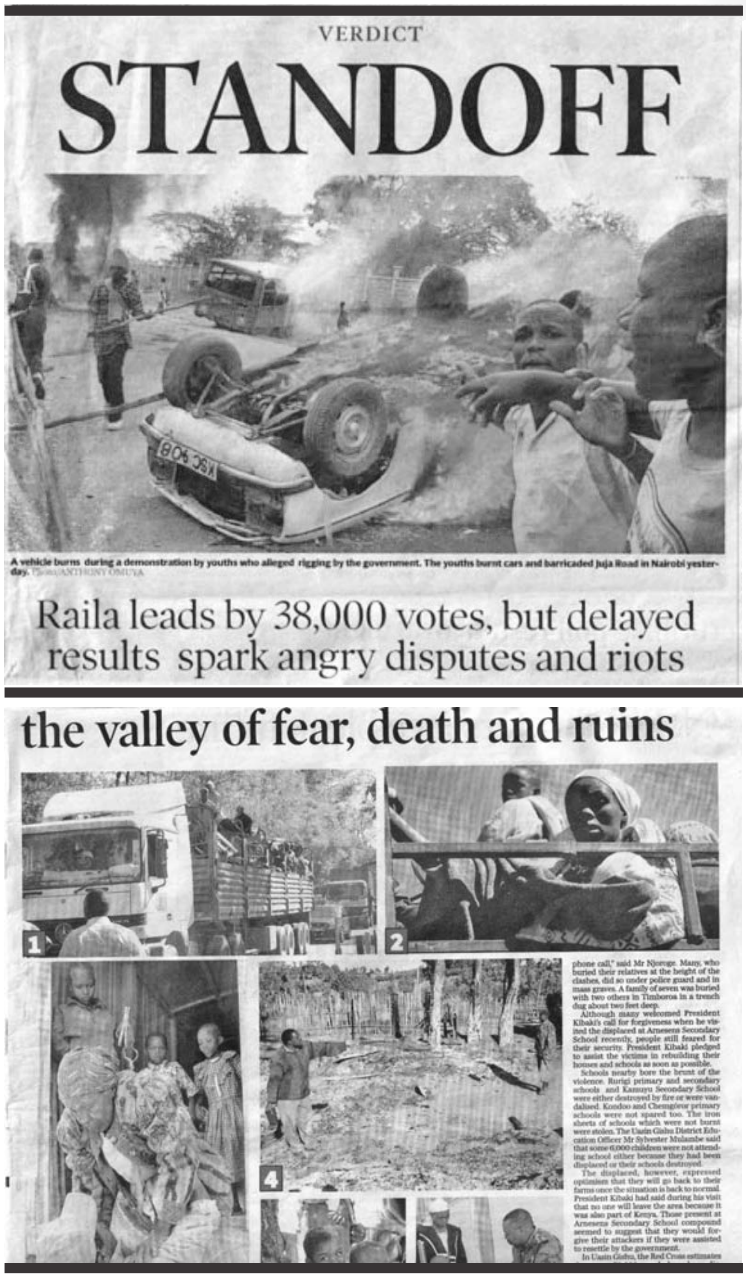
www.nationmedia.com NAIROBI, JANUARY 6, 2008

KENYA IN CRISIS

# Kibaki opens the door for coalition

**Perhaps driven by hunger or just lawlessness, this group of robbers knocked down a passenger as she alighted from a matatu in Kibera, Nairobi, and robbed her of her shopping yesterday. The country has been in near anarchy over the election dispute all week.** Photos/REUTERS

that finally the violence had hit home by manipulating the image of the woman as a victim. Such tabulation of statistics using icons bearing suffering women to denote citizen casualties are the trademark of all reportage on violence in all the world's conflicts.


VERDICT

STANDOFF

A vehicle burns during a demonstration by youths who alleged rigging by the government. The youths burnt cars and barricaded Juja Road in Nairobi yesterday.

Raila leads by 38,000 votes, but delayed results spark angry disputes and riots

the valley of fear, death and ruins

Women and children stranded in refugee camps, walking with their earthly belongings on their shoulders and heads as they fled the violence, or standing with tears in their eyes as they recounted the loss of loved ones started appearing in a bigger proportion. The reality dawned that this was more than just a protest against rigged polls, but a civil war unfolding. With such pitiful images, the country found a desire for peace. The media houses got together to rally the country under the banner of "Save Kenya," using slow motion clips of women fleeing in terror or frozen in despair with a crying child to drive the emotional appeal home. For two days, all the media houses called for peace, and created history by running joint editorials on the same.

The international media jetted in, reading the whole violence under the lens of the Western ideals of democracy. By placing too much emphasis on the Western concepts of democracy, and the fact that there are contentions on the figures the electoral commission issued, the Western media missed the point that the local media was putting across: that there was, unfolding, the systematic killing of people due to ethnic origins, and gender. They ignored the plight of the ordinary civilians and sent back images of men in violent protests and marches. The local media, overwhelmed by the images of masculine violence being screened in international media houses, flipped and started to report like the western media, creating the classical two-form antagonists: those for pro-democracy protesting rigged figures, and the anti-democrats supporting the status quo and protecting their tribemates in power who had been accused of corruption and nepotism. Unlike the genocide in Rwanda (and even the war in Iraq) where the "madonna image" of a woman in distress cuddling an innocent young baby was used

to show the serious humanitarian crisis arising, the images beamed to the world were rid off women and children.

Instead, angry male crowds facing off riot police wearing jungle fatigues and wielding guns replaced them. Visuals of looting filled the news again, satisfying the Western stereotype of Africa as a world of violence and unrest. As such, no emotional attachment to the crisis on humanitarian grounds burdened Western viewers. It was just another case of democracy coming to birth in another volatile African country. It was not viewed as a case of civilian catastrophe happening.

Only when the West began drawing parallels with the Rwanda genocide did the image of woman reappear again. Since men image combat, women better image civilian targets. Women appeared either standing in refugee camps, or trying to salvage property from the smouldering embers of a burnt house, or cuddling a crying child. Kenya was "facing a humanitarian disaster." Figures started being visible again of the number of rape cases. Images appeared of women being desolate in refugee camps: chin in palm, with a pot of measly looking porridge boiling on a makeshift stove while surrounded by hungry looking children, and facing malnutrition. The women interviewed wept as they recounted deaths of loved ones. However, no female imagery appeared when it came to the sides trying to solve the violence. Male politicians still grabbed headlines, calling for mass protests or warning against them, with women in the periphery wailing.

Political parties again decided to manipulate the imaging of women to score points against their opponents. The most obvious was the PNU advert, seeking to accuse the opposition of inciting the genocide. Using the Eldoret Church where 35



# Negotiators face legal minefield in arriving at power-sharing deal

## The law reforms to validate the deal may take months or years to hammer out

By GITAU WARIGI

The announcement that the two sides involved in the Kofi Annan mediation effort had narrowed down their differences to what kind of coalition government to have may not have been the thundering breakthrough the country expected, but it was highly significant nonetheless.

It is understood that ODM are rooting for substantive power-sharing. They have drawn a list of the ministries they want for a transitional period pending major constitutional reforms. Furthermore, the party wants guarantees that President Kibaki will not fire the appointees to those ministries, a notion that the PNU side dismisses as impractical and contrary to existing constitutional norms.

PNU has been agreeable to a coalition where the President appoints those he wishes from ODM as the constitution provides for. The position of an executive prime minister is something the PNU is opposed to in the absence of enabling constitutional provisions. But word is that the government is not totally averse to a non-executive premier, or a minister-in-chief.

"In principle, power-sharing can be agreed upon. But there is a legal minefield. Plus the necessary legal reform will take time, even a few miracles to accomplish. There has to be facilitating bills [brought to Parliament] and amende-

conference fell apart because the draft proposed an executive prime minister. The draft's opponents criticised it for relegating the President to more or less ceremonial duties. The entire anomaly with this arrangement was that the President was expected to be subjected to a direct popular mandate, which the more powerful prime minister was not.

Tanzania navigates this problem by having a non-executive premier who is answerable to the President. Assuming Kenya wants to pursue an arrangement where the President shares executive power with a prime minister, the constitution will have to be altered, which in turn will affect many statutory provisions. It would fundamentally alter the way the government works.

"If we want a prime minister, what scope should he get? Which appointments can he make? Do those include ambassadors? What are the checks and balances that would govern this office? Will the Head of the Public Service report to him? Can the President fire him? Such questions would have a huge ripple effect on the bureaucracy. It may actually be easier to draw up a new constitution from scratch," said Mr Paul Mwangi, a lawyer and author who has written extensively on the Kenyan Judiciary.

The other form of power-sharing that was tried was a coalition between National Alliance Party of Kenya (NAK) and Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) under the Narc umbrella. It failed, which raises questions as to whether another attempt involving the same divided group of politicians won't be equally futile.

But, strictly speaking, the NAK-LDP memorandum of understanding and the follow-up coalition did not amount to sharing executive power. It could not do

**Mr Kofi Annan with President Kibaki and ODM leader Raila Odinga. A grand coalition bringing ODM into government has been proposed.** Photo/FILE

als from those parties. His action did not have the goodwill of the corporate leadership of Kanu, which at the time comprised Mr Uhuru Kenyatta and Mr William Ruto. In that sense it was not an inter-party coalition, leave alone being a government of national unity.

By poaching individual Opposition figures, the President technically did not

election is impractical. But if the matter were to come up, it would raise questions of how a presidential election would be separated from parliamentary and civic elections. Kenya's electoral law says that a General Election must simultaneously be carried out at three levels: presidential, parliamentary and civic.

A re-run of the presidential election

Though at the forefront of those affected, women are missing from negotiations.

people were burnt alive, they asked, "Who killed our *mothers* and children," to draw emotional appeal.

Virtually all calls for aid to the victims of the clashes used images of women i.e. The "Save a Life Fund" by Standard Chartered Bank, Kenya Breweries and Nation Media group showed predominantly images of women fleeing with their earthly belongings on their heads, children on their back.

Cartoons resorted to using the mythical Wanjiku, to say she voted and yet democracy failed her and she is now "lost and confused, not knowing won… but hit by the sad fact that it is Kenya that has lost" (Gado, *Sunday Nation* 13 January editorial cartoon).

Isn't it ironic that while the women were and are still used to state that the nation is in a crisis (oh my God! Look what they are doing even to women! Someone needs to stop this!), figures of the dead and internally displaced people are given en masse, but so far no figures have as yet been published showing gender distribution of how many females died or are in the camps of the internally displaced.

The other irony is that by creating such senses of women as weaklings and victims, it is not surprising that it feeds on masochism making males target women more in the violence that is going on in Kenya. The police were being blamed for not controlling crime. At the same time, to show that the police were using excessive violence, images of women wailing and mourning young children shot by stray bullets while sleeping in their cots were splashed for maximum effect.

Evident also is the discrepancy in terms of the images of victims and those actually showing the victims getting assisted or seeking solutions. No one has queried the fact that while it was images of women in dire need of medical attention either by assault, rape, or malnutrition, images of health services provision are characterised by men. This brings the question as to whether men actually had greater access to health facilities than women did. Men appear in photographs sharing hospital beds amongst themselves, giving interviews about the sad situation on the ground. So where do all the women we see in the same newspapers as victims go? The images of women in the camps are many, just standing next to their children and little belongings, yet when food distribution is shown in the same camps, it is images of men that overwhelm. Where do the women we saw earlier go to get their food?

Even in the interviews about the effects of war and what needs to be done, the majority of interviewees are the men in dark suits, which is ironic since the same media says that it is women who are mainly affected. If they are, then why are we not seeing them explaining what they went through, and what they think ought to be done? Women tend to appear in later segments of the news while men hog all the prime news. Indeed, for all TV stations' talk shows, the average ratio of male to female is roughly 9:1 since violence broke out. Even when discussing how the violence is affecting manufacturing industries, little airtime has been given to the Chairperson of the Kenya Association of Manufactures, Betty Maina. Notable attempts have been few. Njoki Muhoho, a business management consultant, appeared to explain the economic effect of the violence at the workplace on KTN. Citizen has hosted a Red Cross woman explaining the humanitarian crisis. The question is - why the omission of women, some of them "heavyweights" in the political scene, in the analysis of the impact of the violence?

Charity Ngilu, the only female member of the ODM Pentagon (the five-member team that leads the Orange Democratic Party) did not receive as much coverage as the rest of the pentagon concerning the violence. One of the only exceptions is the Justice Minister, Martha Karua, and even so, it is done with the slant of (derogatively) showing her as an abrasive, extremist woman. When the lady whom the media have nicknamed "The Iron Lady of Kenyan Politics" blasted the former British High Commissioner in Kenya Edward Clay on BBC's Hard Talk via video conferencing, TV stations replayed the clips locally.

Radio stations took the cue, hosted call-in sessions jibing her as the "Iron Lady" until the joke went too far, and

callers used her to justify the killings of members of her Gikuyu Tribe. The radio hosts quickly back-tracked and apologised for "not realising that tribal hatred is still rife," and cut short the call-ins saying "let us not promote war." The damage was done. By demonising her, they demonised her tribe, contributing to inciting and justifying the ethnic violence.

An article appeared in the *Sunday Nation* 20 January about a group of women from the Kibera slums, arguably the most affected area of Nairobi, saying they were tired of living in the Jamhuri Show Ground Refugee camp and wanted to go back to the houses from which they were forcibly evicted. They said they wanted to organise a peace march back to the slums, and had already formed themselves into an inter-tribal mass intent on going back home to preach peace to their men. Despite the article giving a date that had been set, and actually following them to the District Officer who granted them administrative permission to go ahead with their march since public gatherings have been outlawed, no images or news of whether the march actually took place or its effects has been forthcoming from the media. Women, especially wives of presidential candidates were prominent and thoroughly scrutinised in the campaign period, but during the violence, no one has bothered to find out what they think about their husbands' misconduct.

What about those ads calling for peace, which do not have much presence of the same women they claim are victimised? The case of the Artistes United for Peace is a case in point – ten male celebrity artistes lend their voices to calling for peace, yet only one woman, Esther Wahome, speaks.

Such errors and omissions, deliberate or not, just go to show how incredibly ironic the depiction of women in the Kenyan ethnic violence has been from the very beginning, due to the patriarchal stereotypes that exist and insensitivity of the Kenyan and international media. The point of view and visual subordination reflect the social distance and manipulability of the symbolic function of the image of the Kenyan woman caught in these unnecessary tribal killings and arsons.

**Writers Bio**
*Simiyu Barasa is a Kenyan Filmmaker, and writer, deeply concerned that his beloved country can produce deaths and statistics for ethnic cleansing stories about Africa.*



# The Role of Activism in Shaping Public Policy: The Case of the Women in Politics Support Unit

By Sibongile Mpofu

**Abstract**

Civil society has been in continuous struggle against the privileges that certain classes and groups in society enjoy because of the control of resources and power. In Zimbabwe, the quest for equality has seen the mushrooming of women activist groups that have tasked themselves to fight for equality between men and women in all positions of power and decision-making. Their only channel of lobbying has been through the media. Media theorists posit that media should be an agency of representation by enabling various social groups to express alternative viewpoints (Curran 1991; Litchenberg 1990). Dahlgren (1991) states that individuals and civic groups must have adequate and equal opportunities for placing their questions on the agenda, and the media has a role in representing these diverse viewpoints. With the current state of the media in Zimbabwe, which is highly polarised on political grounds, it remains to be seen how the media has responded to calls for diversity of views and inclusion of women in all aspects. This paper seeks to analyse the role of women's activism in Zimbabwe, with special focus on Women in Politics Support Unit (WIPSU), in advocating for social change and whether the media has been a willing partner in this cause.

**Key words**

activism, women's movements, democracy, civil society, diversity, gender, feminism.

## Introduction

Activist movements in Africa have called for more freedom and participation in decision-making at both economic and political levels by all groups in society. Under the new democracies, African leaders are also under pressure to establish institutions based on the concept of participation, especially by the marginalised groups of society, such as women. The nationalist movements were the beginnings for the search for democracy in the continent (Ake 2000). However, the coming of independence did not usher any democracy as was expected by the masses. The less powerful members of society, marginalised groups such as women, remain excluded from

mainstream debates about and on issues that affect them.

Activist elements of the civil society that include movement for the empowerment and participation of marginalised groups such as women emerged to lobby for social emancipation. Inequality between men and women in positions of power and decision-making was one of the twelve key areas identified in the landmark 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. Yet, very few women have been able to break the glass ceiling and make it into positions of decision-making.

While women's participation in politics and such decision-making bodies as local government and civil society has improved in most countries, women are still concentrated in the more traditional female-biased professions. In addition, the few that have made it to Parliament and other higher political bodies have also joined the male-bandwagon. While various programmes of action were formulated a few years ago by lobby groups as part of their contribution to the regional campaign, there have been very little tangible results, forcing activists to change the strategy.

Having women Members of Parliament elected does not entirely equate to equilibrium on how policies are formulated. As Karam (1998) argued, the transformative agenda goes beyond the numbers. He maintains that women have to learn the rules and structures and how to use them effectively. They should effectively change those that are not gender-friendly and make strategic inputs, influence the outputs and strive to change attitude and stereotypes. As we shall see later, the case study of the Zimbabwean situation indicates that while women have made inroads in so far as effecting social change through active movements, this change has still not quite equated women on the same level as that of men. The numbers in rural and urban councils, parliament, and cabinet are still not enough to effectively push for a female agenda.

Women's organisations such as Women in Politics Support Unit (WIPSU) in conjunction with the Women's Trust last year held a public meeting on *Zimbabwean Women and the 2008 Election*. The event was aimed at intensifying the 50/50 campaigns and also to find strategies on how to increase women's representation in decision-making at national level.

The role of the media therefore becomes particularly important as they provide the platform through which people can be empowered to participate in national debates. Some scholars like Curran (1991) have argued that the media ought to reflect diversity from civil society and various ethnic groups. As an agency of representation, the media should reflect the varied nature of civil society and enable various social groups to express their viewpoints on areas of policy and national debates.

Theorists note that the media should go further by assisting civil organisations to mobilise support and assist them to register effective protests and develop and promulgate alternatives (Curran 1991). Aware of the role of the media, activists have in the last few years taken the media to task, forcing them to give fair coverage to previously marginalised groups such as women.



Sheila Bapoo, Social Security Minister at Mauritius elections workshop in November 2005. *Credit: Colleen Lowe Morna*

Apart from polarisation, gender imbalances are still entrenched in the male-dominated Zimbabwean media. The local media still finds it not newsworthy to report on issues concerning women. The Gender and Media Baseline Study carried out by Gender Links (GL) and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), showed that while on average women comprise 19.4% of members of parliament in the region, only 8% of politicians whose views are sought for comment are women.

The latest media analysis report by WIPSU for the period July-September 2007 shows that women in politics and decision-making are still not given enough coverage by

the press. The statistical information on the coverage of women in politics done by WIPSU for the period July-September 2007 reveals that:

- 19 out of the 68 articles reviewed referred to female parliamentarians;
- seven out of the 68 articles referred to female councillors
- 22 out of 68 referred to the Vice-President;
- 16 of the 68 articles referred to four ministers and the deputy minister in their official capacity;
- one of the 68 articles referred to the two governors;
- six of the 68 articles referred to the Chairperson of the Commission that runs the city of Harare; and
- one of the 68 stories referred to a female councillor.

Another media monitoring report done by WIPSU focusing on the issues that are covered, showed that most stories covering women in politics were in the scandals category, followed by social events and development and cartoons and pictures. The media gave excess attention to all the scandals that involved female politicians.

In this era of globalisation, varying challenges confront journalists, some of which threaten the very essence of journalism. Media roles are either changing completely or being fused with contemporary issues to reflect changing societies. The right to civil liberties and citizenship has given rise to activism, which has become a major lobbying tool for advocating for social change.

**Women In Politics Support Unit (WIPSU)**

WIPSU was established in April 2001 by a group of feminists to lobby for equal representation between men and women in politics and decision-making positions. The organisation has been laying the foundation for the 2008 harmonised elections by running campaign programmes for female candidates.

WIPSU has been lobbying for political representation since the Parliamentary Elections in 2000, Urban Councils Elections in 2003, 2005 Parliamentary Elections and now 2008 harmonised Presidential, Senatorial, Parliamentary and Council elections. The organisation's strategy has evolved from just lobbying for change and advocacy to actually identifying and mobilising capable candidates, capacity building for identified prospective candidates, mobilising women and the public's support for women candidates and setting up a women candidates campaign fund. Its activism and lobbying has gone a step further from just challenging and changing women's subordination to men, to actually taking control of that social change themselves. According to its programme of action, the organisation has been advocating for the following.

- An electoral system that advocates for women's representation – Electoral systems play a part in advancing women's representation. An electoral system can best be understood as a way in which votes are translated into seats. The choice of an electoral system can effectively determine who is elected and which party gains power. Zimbabwe's electoral system does not ensure a representative parliament.
- Party positions on the greater representation of women and strategies to realise this goal by 2008 – Women in the opposition highlighted that they are in a struggle within a struggle. The political terrain women are operating in is not conducive. Women in these parties are facing resistance from men within their political parties. Under the guise of democracy, women candidates are falling out in primaries. Party politics have strong bearing on women's participation.
- Mobilising the women's vote – by encouraging women to come forward, providing a conducive environment for participation in politics at all levels, training potential candidates and their campaign teams, building alliances within the women's movement and lobbying and advocating for changes in culture and systems in different political parties.

The organisation has also lobbied for a repeal of legislation that impedes on the rights of women, such as the Electoral Act, Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) and Public Order and Security Act (POSA), as well as civic and voter education. WIPSU's contribution and certainly that of many other women's movements and rights activists has contributed immensely to gender

diversity in Zimbabwe. A significant number of women have entered the political arena.

**Success Stories**

Latest statistics from the Government show that the number of women who are contesting in the council elections has risen from 75 in 2005 to more than 800 aspiring candidates for the 1 700 seats in the 29 March elections. Female representation in the Politburo and central committee also rose to 38% and 33% respectively.

Quoted in *The Herald* (13 March 2008, E8), the Minister of Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development, Oppah Muchinguri said, "Since women have started agitating for the quota system, we have recorded a lot of achievements especially within the ruling party, where out of three top posts, one is occupied by a woman." In parliament, although the situation is not satisfactory in the House of Assembly, she said the quota system was successfully achieved in the senate with 36% representation.

In the ruling party Zanu-PF, senior women have been allocated parliamentary seats without going through the primary elections. The party has also requested 60% quota for the local government and parliamentary candidates to be allocated to women. The party has also reserved to appoint a female Vice-President, Joice Mujuru.

Opposition parties have also embraced the quota system to promote women candidates as mandated by the SADC principles and guidelines on elections. Both factions of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) have a policy commitment to equal participation of women.

Affirmative action in promoting policies has also helped propel women into decision-making positions in public, private and professional sectors (Dahlerup 1998). While the quota system has been criticised as perpetuating stereotypes, it has however given the opportunity for women to somehow break the glass ceiling.

On the regulatory front, success stories include the Sexual Offences Bill in which women lobbied for the inclusion of a clause that makes marital rape an offence that attracts a prison term. Other laws include the Constitution Amendment No.17, and Section 23 (a) and the Domestic Violence Act, amongst others.

**Shortcomings**

While laudable – the activists' lobbying has borne some fruits to a certain extent – women's movements still feel there is a yawning gap concerning equality amongst women and men in society. Much of the blame has been put on the local media, which according to WIPSU has not played its part as a vehicle for diverse views and representation of marginalised groups. The democratic function of the media in Zimbabwe exists only in theory. While it should be organised in such a manner that they enable diverse social groups to express their views as posits (Dahlgren & Sparks 1991:30), the Zimbabwean media is still polarised not only on the political front, but on gender. This is worsened by the fact that the media is male dominated: no female journalists are in editor's positions.



ZANU PF supporters chant slogans as they listen to an address by President Robert Mugabe at ZANU PF Headquarters in Harare on August 29, 2007. *Credit: IRIN*

A democratic media system should ideally represent different interests in society. It should facilitate their participation in the public domain by enabling them to contribute to public debate and have input in the framing of public policy. However, research done by media monitoring projects has shown a very negative picture in the coverage of women in the media. Media monitoring reports done by WIPSU for both 2006 and 2007 indicate that more of their campaigns now need to target the media itself as a constituent.

**Table showing number of stories covered by newspapers in 2007**

| Paper | July | August | September | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Herald | 14 | 19 | 13 | 46 |
| Zimbabwe Independent | 0 | 6 | 1 | 7 |
| Financial Gazette | 2 | 3 | 2 | 7 |
| Standard | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| Sunday Mail | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| ***Total*** | **17** | **30** | **21** | **68** |

*Source: WIPSU media monitoring report, July-September 2007*

The table shows a great fall of figures from the previous quarter. The *Herald* continues to comparatively carry more items on women politicians with 46 articles. There is, therefore, need for media to cover more women parliamentarians, including rural councillors and senators, who command a large population of marginalised women.

Having said that, the milestones that women activists have achieved in Zimbabwe, which to a certain extent are commendable, would all go to waste if the activism is solely to put women in positions of power and end there. Mtintso (1999) noted that having numbers in parliament, rural or urban councils would not yield any desirable social change and equilibrium in society unless those women are capacitated to push forward the activism strategy.

While Abzug and Jain (1996) noted that women's presence and actions in parliament can force the institution, society's perceptions about women and force policies to change, having more numbers in parliament could be meaningless if women are still stereotyped and look down upon themselves as inferior to men. The danger is that once they enter the political elite, they cease to associate themselves with the lot and fail to identify with them, thus they tend to embrace the male agenda. Simply having women in positions of power therefore, fails to bring tangible results to the women's movements that worked hard to build them up.

Women in parliament should constantly work with women and feminist movements outside parliament so that there is a powerful voice pushing the women's agenda. There should be no dichotomy between these two strands but rather they should be seen as interdependent and complementing each other (Karam 1998). Shortcomings of gender activism in Zimbabwe have been lack of capacity-building to our women leaders themselves, before they could also lobby for the capacitating of women in general and media in specific, to play an effective role in social change through national policy debates.

**Conclusion**

Media is one of the pillars of society, expected to play its democratic role rather than categorising. It is expected to change negative mindsets in society. With the rise of civil society and the consciousness on the rights of individuals or groups, the media's role is expected to even go further by assisting these civil organisations and acting as a platform for their protests. Activists have witnessed this loophole that without the support of the media, their struggles would continue being a far cry. Also, an assumption that individual women's organisations or women politicians would effect change may not be ideal, but rather a whole encompassing programme targeting women, explicitly as women, and not on the grounds of their social standing in society. Having a whole encompassing women's movement with a clear feminist goal could give rise to meaningful activism that would be able to put more pressure on the patriarchal systems in Zimbabwe.

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**Writers Bio**

Sibongile Mpofu is a media lecturer at the National University of Science and Technology in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies. A holder of a Masters degree in International Journalism from the University of Westminster in London, she has participated in gender advocacy programmes in Zimbabwe. She is one of the 10 Journalists from Zimbabwe that took part in the AfricaWoman project, run by the British Council. Her research interests are in the area of gender, media and development.



## Gender in Russian Media during Election Campaigns

By Tatiana Frolova, Olga Smirnova, Elena Vartanova



**Abstract**

Russia during parliamentary and presidential elections made an interesting case for research of gender issues coverage by the national media. Although Russian women traditionally form a large and active part of media audiences, they have not yet received sufficient attention by the media. At the same time, during the last few years gender consciousness has been substantially developed, however, this process is accompanied by the whole complex of controversies.



**Key words**

elections, media, gender

According to research of gender tolerance of leading Russian Mass Media during election campaigns, women's presence in the media content and information flows is still insignificant, and this is especially true of the political aspects of media content. Russian media often ignore presence of women in politics and other parts of public life. This also reflects a low degree of women participation in the public policy of the country.

This all has been reflected in the Russian press substantially. Thus, content analysis of Russian leading print media represents the most adequate information model of gender equality in a political and public sphere of the country and its coverage by the most popular media outlets. Efficiency of the study affects the realisation of one of the most urgent problems of gender policy – the formation of gender tolerance in modern Russian journalism.

The study was carried out by the Center for Gender and Media Studies which has been established by the Faculty of Journalism, Lomonossov Moscow State University (MSU) and the Russian Union of Journalists in April 2007 as a separate unit at the Faculty of Journalism. Among

the primary goals of the Centre are the analysis of gender sensitivity of the Russian media and integration of gender studies in journalism education.

Social experience and the history of gender relations in Russia are unique. The problems that Russian society is now facing took their shape through the several decades of the Soviet period and have grown more complicated in the course of the deep transformation process which Russia is experiencing now. Taking into consideration the peculiarities mentioned, the concept and the findings of our study can be fully understood.

Up to the beginning of the 20th century, Russia had been developing as a traditional androcratic society with men playing the dominant part in all the spheres of life. Through the 20th century the gender contracts were changing as Russian society was getting modernised. After the Revolution in 1917 when the monarchy was toppled and the socialist regime was beginning to fledge, the government introduced a policy of freeing woman from the traditional family, involving her in social life and providing the conditions for her economic independence from men. Women took active part in the formation of the new society and in the development of the state economy.

The gender contract of "the working mother" was promoted all through the Soviet period. The phenomenon of the so-called Soviet "super-woman" – the woman who not only worked at the production sites together with men but also took care of the family - was shaped. In accordance with the androcratic tradition, the men did not get involved in household activities. The state of women was getting more complicated in the atmosphere of total deficit typical for the Soviet economy. Moreover, despite the proclaimed equality, subtle discrimination of women was still a characteristic feature of the social sphere. Thus, the peculiarities of the gender order in Russia have always been interrelated with the active role of the government in establishing gender norms and contracts, i.e. the emancipation policy and the policy of supporting maternity. At the same time, one of its peculiar features was maintaining the traditional relationship model in the spheres of family and sexual life. In the 1980s, Perestroika brought about political reforms, the switch to market relations and freedom of speech, including the abolition of censorship in the mass media. However, gender relations influenced by the unique gender history still had a peculiar nature.

The development of gender relations was highly controversial. On the one hand, the so-called androcratic Renaissance could be witnessed in many spheres of public life: the formation of social layers allowed some women to "return" to the family and become "simple women" again. On the other hand, many Russian women having great social and working experience were able to make successful personal careers.

Men's gender roles also changed. The policy of state paternalism eliminated the typically "male" qualities in many men and hindered their self-realisation under the new circumstances. And on the contrary, with the state no longer being in full control, some men could realise their "male" potential and felt they owned the life and the women. Another important point is that first of all, the major social changes affected the women, the families, the children. The gender roles in Russia were changing, the relations becoming tense.

Sharp gender controversies are one of the many complicated social problems in this country. The gender contract in Russia is still different from the "equal status" contract typical for a modern family in many Western countries. The nature of this phenomenon is influenced by a number of peculiar features of gender relations in Russia. The partner relations between genders based on mutual agreement and concerning all spheres from family life to politics are not common for Russia, be it in family life or politics.

The statistics show that Russian women, who make up 52% of the population, are hardly represented in political life: Russia takes 97th place in the world for women's participation in the country's parliament. The current tendencies cannot be called positive either: women made up only 98.4% of seats in parliament 2003-2007, the percentage being significantly lower than in 1993-1995, with 13.5% of seats taken by women.

Women in Russia have been traditionally employed in the least-paid industries, including in state-subsidised spheres: education, Medicare, culture, the segregation of women in these sectors is increasing steadily. Men still take top administrative positions much more often than women. To illustrate, women make up 72% of state executives in the country, but only 12% of top managers in these spheres. Despite the rapid growth in female employment and women's relatively active part in politics, inequality is still typical in both family and private life.

There are many purely male problems in this country as well. The major changes in the social and economic life affected men more than women. The average life duration for males is less than 60 years; the rate of deaths from unnatural reasons is extremely high. Permanent stress and risky behaviour have become quite an ordinary thing for Russian men. The image of the man of the late 20th-early 21st century is one of a successful businessman, a "macho", who feels ashamed of any weakness or any worries about his health and takes aggressive behaviour and polygamy for granted. Manliness is often associated with self-destruction, i.e. the behaviour connected with risking one's life, bad habits, neglecting one's health etc. The sharp increase in the number of divorces and illegitimate children, in the figures of social orphanhood and crime are the logical consequences of the change in the gender roles and the lack of harmony in gender relations.

The urgency of gender problems is demanding changes in the existing social policy and necessitates serious discussions on the subject. The level of gender consciousness reflects the general state of the democratic processes in society. This approach has become the chief theme of our study: how are gender problems perceived at the political level? How are they expressed in the election campaign?

October – November 2007 we conducted a study on the following subject: "Gender expertise in the political performance of Russians" and "Gender problems in the election campaign 2007" with the focus on mass media data reflecting the course of the parliamentary election campaign. It is a well-known fact that the main functions of elections in the democratic system are the articulation and representation of the various interests of people, the expansion of communications, encouraging the electorate to settle urgent social problems and the modernisation of society by means of political competition.

In the course of the election campaign, the role and actual political significance of various social problems are reviewed. This makes it possible to compare the existing state of gender problems to their factual influence on the development of the political agenda, i.e. the society's readiness to resolve gender problems. We wanted to know if gender problems could compete with other up-to-date social objectives through the period of active political performance. We were also interested to know which gender problems attracted the greatest media attention at that time.

The main research method is the content analysis of media texts with further generalising of quantitative and qualitative characteristics.

Due to major political, economic and social transformation, the Russian media market has undergone dramatic changes. Actually, it has been created anew. However, the federal daily newspapers still keep their leading positions and remain the most powerful group in the Russian media market. Therefore, six federal newspapers were chosen as the main empirical basis for the analysis:

- "Izvestiya"– the leading federal newspaper;
- "Rossiyskaya Gazeta" – the official newspaper of the government;
- "Novaya Gazeta" – the liberal opposition newspaper;
- "Kommersant" – the liberal opposition newspaper for the business circles;
- "Komsomolskaya Pravda" – the mass newspaper with the highest circulation; and
- "Moskovskiy Komsomolets" – the newspaper popular among young people.

120 newspaper issues were used for the study. In addition, extracts from other newspapers and magazines, political programs, TV-debates, commercials and internet-forums were used as background information.

Our study was based at the so-called "positive" gender concept presupposing that society should aim for harmony of the interests of males and females, at setting the conditions for fulfilling the gender potentials. In view of this, we left out some questions typical for gender research, such as the following: how many women run for seats in Parliament? Which questions are set by female candidates? Are women subject to sexism and the language of aggression?

We were interested in such topics as: does society accept the existence of gender problems? In which spheres of life are they the most urgent problems? What is the current rating of gender problems? Do the political process participants take gender problems seriously? How do mass media view gender problems? Are gender problems covered differently in media representing different political views? Such an approach determined the choice of the main categories for analysis:

- *the topics* of the texts showed the distribution of gender problems among the different spheres of social life;
- *the problem range* reflected the rating of certain gender problems depending on the frequency of their mentioning;
- *the positions* identified the approach, the estimates, the aggression language;
- *the persons* determined the numbers of men/women as the subjects of comments;
- *the genres* revealed the nature of addressing gender problems.

The selected texts were divided into two groups: "election-related" (423) and "gender-related" (69); a small part of texts (34) touching upon both the election and the gender problems. The given texts were of the ones of special interest and became the subject of detailed analysis.

The most interesting results are as follows:

Only 8% of texts in the "election-related" group had any mentioning of various gender problems *(diagram 1),* whereas in the "gender-related" group 49% of texts were connected with the elections *(diagram 2).* Consequently, society is willing to deal with gender problems, but politicians prefer not to notice them and do not regard them as serious. The pro-governmental "Rossiyskaya Gazeta" (14%) and the popular newspapers for the masses (6%) paid the greatest attention to gender, while the business newspaper "Kommersant" and the liberal edition "Novaya Gazeta" did the least (2%)*(see diagram 3).*

**Diagram 1**

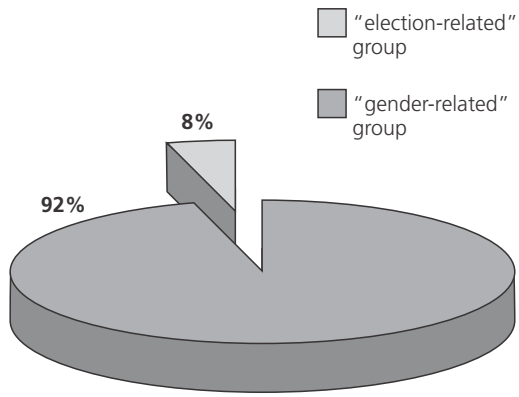



**Diagram 2**

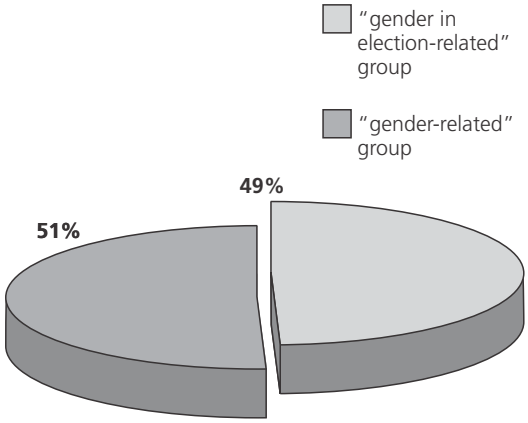
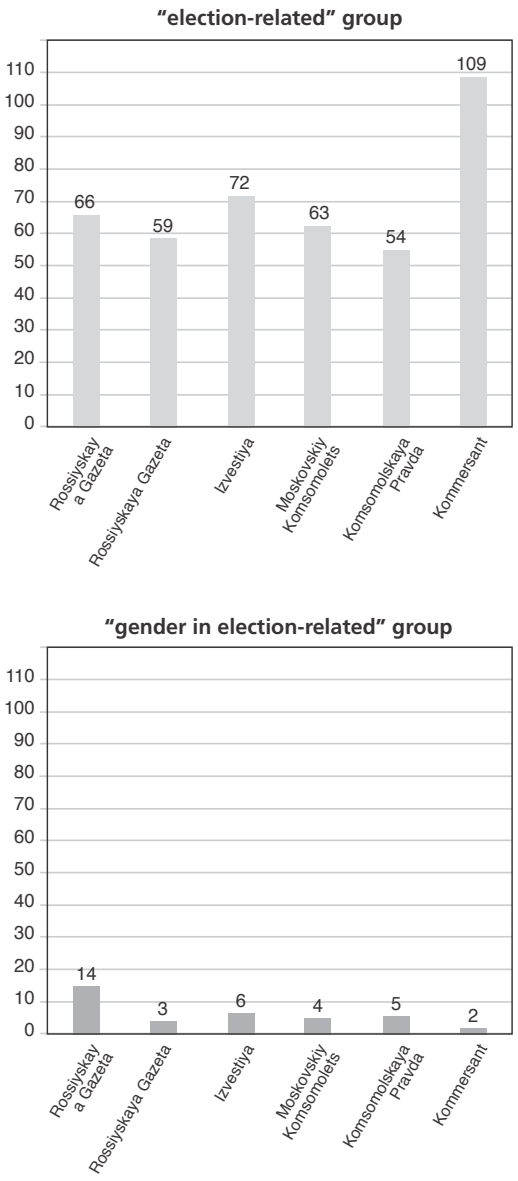


**Diagram 3**




Gender problems were most often mentioned in extracts referring to social and family spheres, and also to politics (34%, 24% and 25% respectively). Less often, they referred to economy and culture (3% and 9 %). This fact can be explained by the following reasons: firstly, the election campaign of the party in power was based on employing achievements in the social sphere (two years earlier the government initiated the massive social programs, including one for demographic development), the range of social problems bringing about the gender approach. Secondly, the notions of "gender" and "sex" come closest in the private sphere; the problem of sex being one of the favourite subjects for popular journalism, often determining the topic selection for popular media and reflecting the change in gender roles in the private sphere and family life.

The feminisation of the social sphere and the demographic problems connected with females dominating in the troublesome social sector are heading the rating of the most up-to-date issues. The political programmes paid great attention to the problems mentioned; the media also concentrated on the deviant behavior of men and the army service. The male media images were marked by greater negativism; self-sacrifice and disquiet prevailed in the female representations. A significant number of texts do not define a particular problem but rather describe situations marked by problematic relations having a discreet gender nature.

The neutral approach is typical for positions and assessments (48%); the attitude to gender problems is most often based on the modern perception of gender roles (34%), only 18% of texts expressing a view supporting the traditional division of roles.

The historical experience of the Russian people, in which women have long been participating in the differentiation of labour, has played its part. The Russian newspapers believe women do not need any special political support; they stress that the human potential on the whole has not been fulfilled.

We can see the different approach to covering gender problems in different newspapers: the popular mass editions express greater interest in social problems (including gender problems), but the influential quality media tend to pay more attention to covering and assessing the actions of the government and political parties. To them, citizens are not equal partners. The journalists of all kinds of media are not free from gender stereotypes.

The main conclusions of the study are as follows:

- the position of gender problems on the political agenda does not correspond to their actual significance;
- the gender consciousness of the Russian society is being transformed, all the controversies of this process being revealed;
- the media coverage of gender problems is spontaneous and does not reach the level of quality analysis;
- the mass media are not free from gender stereotypes; and
- the popular press is ahead of the quality press as far as the formation of gender consciousness is concerned.

To sum up, the given study reflects the controversy of gender consciousness: society feels and sees these problems, the mass media show that it is high time they became an important point on the political agenda. However, both the politicians' and experts' community do not pay enough attention to them. They still view social problems overall and gender problems in particular as something not important enough to be used in politics fully. Only an insignificant part of the texts covering the election campaign was devoted to the subject of gender, and the political platform did not reflect the topic adequately.

To a certain extent, the above-mentioned can be explained by the nature of the Russian parliamentary election campaign, which was fiercely criticised in both the Russian and the world media. All of the experts pointed out that the television debate ratings were quite low (no more than 3%), that the advertising was not quite professional and that a real competition of ideas never took place. The assessment of the elections said, "The persons beat the ideas." The future of the president rather than the future of the society became the main topic of discussion in the press.

The Russian social experience is not only unique but can also become a lesson to societies that are now passing through a transformation period. It is not only government actions or the nature of the economic relations that the development of democracy and civil society depends on. By means of a single example, our study has shown that the press has to hear the voice of society, look at its citizens, and represent their interests. The problem of civil upbringing and human development make up one of the main tasks for such a society.

**Writers Bio**

Tatiana I. Frolova – PhD; associate professor of the Faculty of Journalism, Lomonossov Moscow State University. The author of numerous study guides and articles in the spheres of social problems representation, civil journalism and social networks, and healthcare journalism. Looks into the problems of modern journalism teaching methods and conducts modern Russian media content studies.

Olga V. Smirnova – PhD; associate professor of the Faculty of Journalism, Lomonossov Moscow State University; Deputy Dean; Head of the Center for Gender and Media Studies. The author of numerous articles, study guides and methodology works on the topic of technologies for teaching journalism, organisation and methods of additional education for journalists, problems of gender and digital equality.

Elena L. Vartanova - PhD; professor of the Faculty of Journalism, Lomonossov Moscow State University; Acting Dean; Chair in media Theory and Economics, Head of the Center for Russian-Finnish Research in Journalism, Media and Culture. She conducted research on Information society in Finland, Europe and Russia, made a systematic study of media industries in market economies, and published a book on media economics paying particular attention to processes of convergence and digitalisation. The author and editor of numerous monographs and textbooks on media economics, media convergence and digitalisation.

# Media Watch



Arthur Chatura and Noma Masina, Business Unusual workshop, Rhodes University
*Credit: Trevor Davies*



## Gender and Tabloids in Southern Africa

Edited by Colleen Lowe Morna and Sikhonzile Ndlovu



**Abstract**

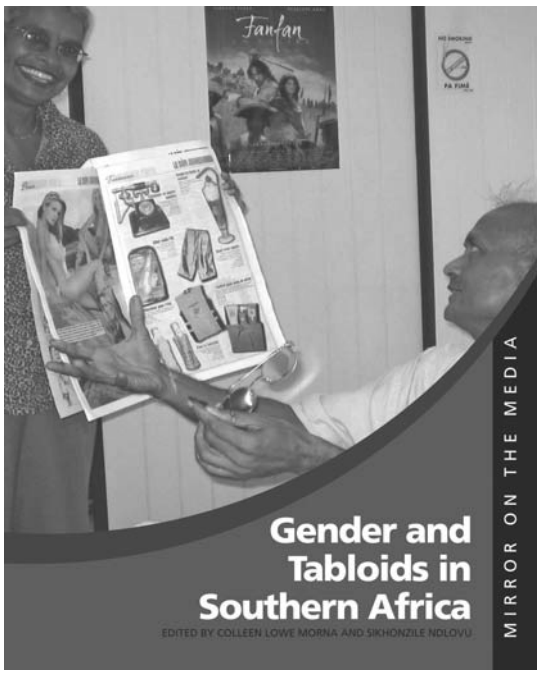
As part of the Mirror on the Media series of monitoring reports coordinated by Gender Links with the support of the Open Society Initiative of Southern Africa (OSISA) on gender and the media, Gender and Tabloids in Southern Africa explores the growing phenomena of tabloid media in the Southern African region. The findings indicate that when it comes to gender, women continue to be unheard voices, especially when it comes to "hard news."

**Key words**

tabloids, media, gender

The study focused on gender and tabloids in three Southern African countries with the highest density of tabloids, defined in terms of both size and content. It included monitoring of three newspapers in each country over the month of June 2007. The monitoring covered a total of 2546 news items: 859 in Mauritius; 1203 in South Africa and 484 in Tanzania (where tabloids are much fewer pages than in the other countries). Researchers also conducted desktop research, interviewed editors, gathered case material and administered an audience survey to 280 readers in the three countries.

This research focused on gender representation and portrayal in tabloids and audience responses to this. This is the first time that GL and GEMSA have conducted research on tabloids. To our knowledge, it is the first comprehensive study on gender and tabloids in Southern Africa.



Tabloids have been an important focus of current media debates. Most of these debates have focused on tabloids in relation to journalistic standards, media ethics, and the related tabloidisation of the media [IAJ (2006) Strelitz & Steenveld (2005); Joseph (2005*a* & 2005*b);* Berger (2005]. Limited research exists on gender portrayal in tabloids. It is thus appropriate to evaluate not only the reasons behind the popularity of this medium but also how women (in particular) are able to access tabloids, how women and men are portrayed, and how they respond to this form of media.

**Origin of tabloids**

The word "tabloid" itself is a derivation from "tablette," an old French word for "*small slab… with or for inscription'* (Langer 1998). There are a number of serious newspapers with serious, hard-news content of high journalistic standards in tabloid form (i.e. *Mail and Guardian* in South African and the *Daily Mail* in London).

However, the modern day understanding of tabloids is most closely aligned to the British tabloids, renowned for their emphasis on scandal, particularly as it relates to politicians and other personalities (sports or entertainment), and recipe of "news" evidently popular with the "masses," i.e. the working class majority. The distinctions are felt in terms of readership where the mainstream press is seen as more *highbrow* and its readers distinguished (from *low brow,* popular culture that is). There are not always clear differences between tabloid and mainstream media. This is primarily due to the characteristics of tabloids becoming increasingly evident in the mainstream media. Tabloidisation of media is a phrase generally used to explain the growing trend of mainstream media reflecting the character of tabloid-style journalism. This has resulted in the terms "tabloid" and "tabloidisation" being (erroneously) conflated, although they are distinct categories.

The tabloidisation of the mainstream media in South Africa for example, is evident in the blurring of boundaries between the more established daily, the *Sowetan,* and the newer *Daily Sun*. The former is a traditional mainstream paper in tabloid format and the latter a tabloid (in content and form). The shift, it is argued, is partially due to "the bottom line," where the uptake of the *Daily Sun* encroached on the *Sowetan's* market, thus necessitating a review of strategy in securing readers.

For the purposes of this research, tabloids are defined both in terms of **form** and **content.** The following characteristics broadly define the kind of newspapers that constitute the focus of this research.

"Tabloid" refers to:

- A type of news characterised as "*extravagant, sensationalistic, over dramatic and focused almost entirely on a human interest angle"* (ibid.).
- Media that contains news in a condensed form and much photographic material, and that features stories of violence, crime, or scandal presented in a breathtaking style (http://www.radessays.com/viewpaper/45781/Motzart.html).

In a nutshell, tabloids are newspapers focusing on scandal, gossip, entertainment and sport. It is a press that is characterised by sensationalism. Their use of photographs and colour add to the visual appeal, and the language (basic address) of tabloids adds to the popularity of both the form and content. For convenience, the non-tabloid press is referred to in the research as the "mainstream media."




Johannesburg news stand *Credit: Brendan Kennedy*

**The African context**

Measured against the above definition, the African media landscape has seen a proliferation of tabloid journalism over the past few years. In South Africa, newspaper readership trends show a steady growth in favour of tabloids (AMPS 2005). Together the *Daily Sun, Sunday Sun, Sowetan, Son* and *Sunday World* command the biggest share of total readership (that's 11.2%; 6.3%; 5.3%; 4.5% and 3.4% respectively).

According to an article on Tanzanian media by Lawrence Kilimwiko, not a day goes by in Tanzania without sensational headlines about death splashed across the front page of its tabloid newspapers[1]. Kilimkwiko suggests that colour photographs of grisly accidents or violent crimes feature most prominently.

Very little empirical research exists on in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, but a cursory desktop review conducted for this research in ten Southern African countries showed that out of a total of 178 publications, 37 (or 20 %) are regarded by media analysts in those countries as tabloid both in form and content as defined earlier.

**Making media accessible or destroying journalism?**

In South Africa, tabloids have been the subject of an ongoing debate in media-related publications, specifically *Equid Novi*, the *Media* magazine, the *Rhodes Journalism Review* [Wasserman (2005); Strelitz & Steenveld (2005); Joseph (2005*a* & 2005*b);* Berger (2005)]. Arguments have focused primarily on tabloids in relation to journalistic standards, media ethics, and the related tabloidisation of the media. Similar debates are emerging in other countries as the tabloid phenomenon takes root. These debates have essentially focused on whether or not tabloids are "good journalism" or good for journalism. This is situated within the ambit of ongoing dialogue about journalistic standards and standards of journalism.

Unlike tabloids, mainstream media – it is argued - present objective facts, and are meant to reflect and interrogate the political and socio-economic realities of societies. Moreover, as Lynette Steenveld (2006, 20) argues, the address of mainstream press is more authoritative than tabloids (which are conversational): "[t]heirs is serious, official, and impersonal, aimed at producing understanding and belief" […] "they address their readers from the position of one who knows, and is providing information for those who don't."

Argument in support of tabloids often focuses on a form of journalism, which talks to the needs of "ordinary" people and which profiles the realities of working class people in particular. It is argued that tabloids focus more on people than the state. As Bird (1998) argues, the growth of the tabloids and the tabloidisation of the media points to the audience preference for "human interest stories, celebrity gossip and life-style advice". This observation concurs with findings of the recent Gender and Media Audience Study (2005) conducted across 12 countries, which found that women and men would like more local and human-interest news (Lowe Morna, Rama and Muriungi, 2006, 19).

Tabloids, it is argued, contribute to public dialogue and debate, which in post apartheid South Africa as well as emerging multi party democracies in the region reflect a move away from the historical marginalisaton of the country's majority and the preserve of the public sphere for the ruling minority and elites. On the other hand, arguments against tabloids highlight the ways in which tabloids often violate the basic ethics of journalism including objectivity, investigation, facts and the "pursuit of the truth."

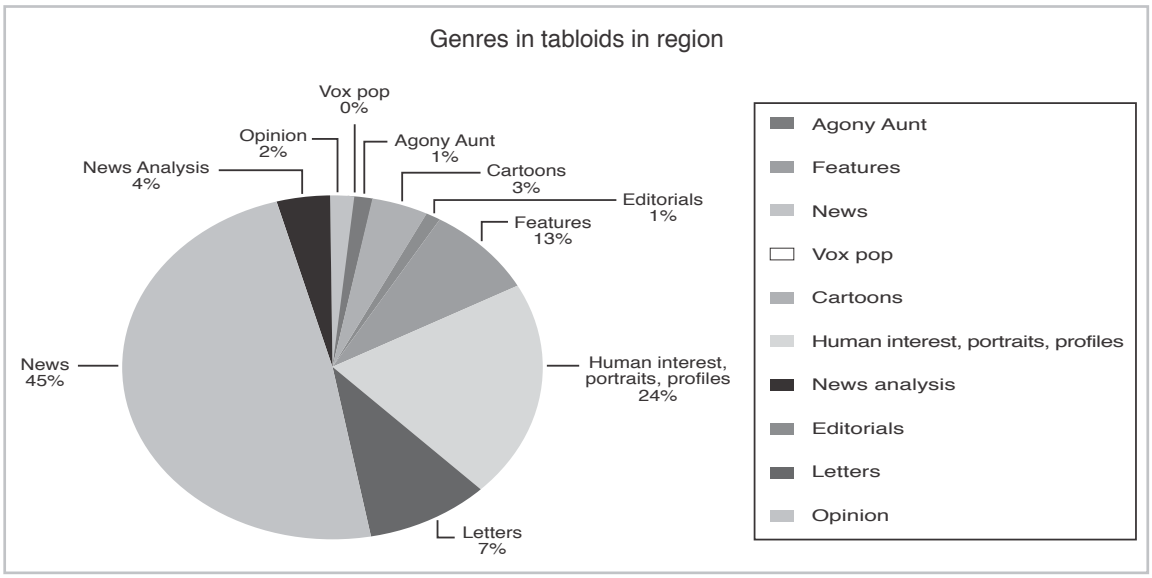
**Findings**

Regardless of the different arguments for and against tabloids, one sure fact is that they are a growing part of the media landscape. As such, understanding their reach, scope, and content is part of understanding the regional media landscape. The research pointed to the following findings.

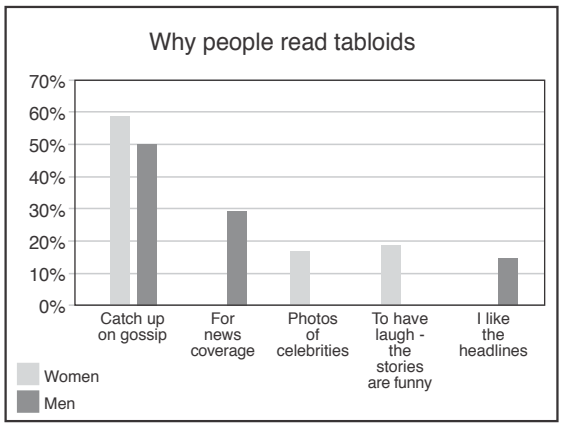
- *The tabloid phenomenon is mushrooming across Southern Africa*: Out of 178 newspapers in ten countries, 37 (or 20 %) are regarded by media analysts in those countries as tabloid both in form

and content. These are characterised by sensation with stories are told in a melodramatic and breathless tone. Stories about superstitious incidents are often reported as fact, with little or no verification.

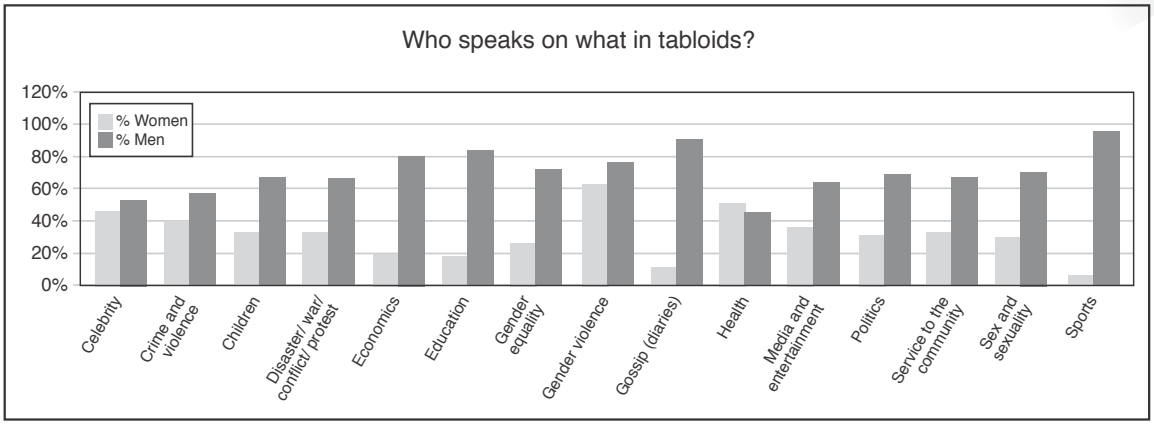
- *The main target is lower wage earners:* In all countries tabloids target the working and lower middle class and in South Africa the main target is black readers. The research showed that the majority of tabloid readers have a secondary school education, although in Mauritius quite a high proportion have a tertiary school education.
- *Men are the main buyers of tabloids:* Although tabloid editors claim to be targeting women, the research shows that they are not the primary buyers of tabloids. Only 43% women buy the paper directly compared to 62% of men. Women are more likely than men to get the paper from a spouse, other family member, friend or neighbour.
- *Tabloids make use of more images than mainstream media*. Images make up 21% of content in tabloids while images take up only 15% of space in mainstream papers. Advertising takes up 35% of space in tabloids compared to 44% in mainstream media.
- *Most editorial content in tabloids is of a non-news nature.* News constitutes only 45% of the editorial package (except in Mauritius, where the figure is 60%). The balance comprises human interest stories, features and other genres.
- *Audiences like interactive aspects of tabloids*: The favourite genres for women are the agony aunts and human interest profiles and portraits, and news and articles that ask for feedback. The favourite genres for men are articles that ask for feedback, news and editorials. The fact that both women and men responded so positively to "articles in which people are asked what they think about something" suggests that there is more scope for interactive features in tabloids.
- *Sports and celebrity news dominate:* Both tabloids and mainstream media share a love of sports (21 % of all topics in this research and 17 % in the Gender and Media Baseline Study). On the other hand, mainstream media has a much higher proportion of economic and political news (25 % compared to 10 % in the case of tabloids). Tabloids in turn have a much higher proportion of media, entertainment and celebrity news (24 % in tabloids compared to 8 % in mainstream media).
- *Gender hardly features as a topic:* At about one % each, gender violence and gender equality are equally marginal topics in both tabloids and the mainstream media.
- *Community concerns are not well covered*: Despite the claim by editors that tabloids are like a service arm to communities, the majority of both women and men felt that tabloids only cover issues affecting the community partially, not well or very poorly.



- *The main reason for reading tabloids, especially among women, is for entertainment and escapism:* Some 60% women and 50% men said they read tabloids to "catch up on the gossip." Other reasons given by women included looking at photos of celebrities and "to have a laugh." Other reasons given by men included more serious reasons, like news coverage. Men also like the headlines. Significantly, none of the women said they liked the headlines, which often perpetrate blatant gender stereotypes.




- *Tabloids are not the main source of news for their readers:* Tabloids are *not* the main source of news for their audiences; indeed other than the internet they are the least likely source of news. Overall, TV is the main source of news for audiences in the three countries (although there are country variations, such as Mauritius, in which radio is cited as the main source of news).
- *Despite the fact that they read tabloids a lot, audiences are aware that tabloids do not always tell the truth:* When asked to select from a long list of what they dislike about tabloids, 52% women and 50% men said they do not always tell the truth (see figure 2.13). The second highest proportion said that tabloids exaggerate. Men said that tabloids do not provide useful local information.
- *Gender biases abound in the way stories are told:* Applying the Gender and Media (GEM) classification system for the items monitored, the research found that that about two thirds of these items demonstrated gender biases of one kind or the other, with only one third classified as "gender aware" (see 2.14). Audiences perceived a high level of blatant stereotypes.
- *Women's views are often ignored:* Women constitute 25% of news sources in tabloids in the three countries monitored compared to the Southern African regional average of 19% in the Gender and Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) the latest study for which such figures are available for the mainstream media. In Mauritius and Tanzania the figures are exactly the same for tabloids and the GMMP (24% and 18% respectively).
- *South African tabloids have the highest proportion of women sources*: At 30%, women sources in tabloids in South Africa were the highest of the three counties and slightly higher than in South Africa's GMMP figure of 26%.
- *But the voices of black women are still marginalised:* At 18%, black women are better represented in tabloids than in the mainstream media (7% in the GMBS) but are still grossly under-represented relative to their strength in the population (45%).
- *Women are more likely to be seen than heard:* Women in the tabloids monitored constituted 35% of all images (compared to 25% of sources). The majority of audiences in all countries, and especially women in Tanzania, believed that there are more pictures of women than men in tabloids even though this is in fact not the case. This points to the power of visual imagery.
- *Women have little to say on 'hard core' issues:* As in the findings in both the GMBS and GMMP, women's views are under-represented in all topic categories in tabloids, especially in sports, politics and economics. Unlike the mainstream media, in which women had more to say than men in only the gender equality topic category, in tabloids men's views predominate even in this topic category. The only topic category in which women's views predominated in tabloids was health, with celebrity news a close second.




- *Male reporters predominate:* Tabloid newsrooms, like those of their mainstream counterparts, are dominated by men. The monitoring showed that women journalists constituted 29% of those who wrote stories, compared to 22% print journalists in the GMBS. This varies across countries, from 37% women writers in South African tabloids to 21% in Tanzania.
- *Gender stereotypes are reinforced in the roles that women and men are portrayed in:* The only occupational category in which women predominate in tabloids is as beauty contestants, home makers and domestic workers, office workers, social workers and students. Men on the other hand predominate in a range of roles, from professional, to NGO, to business person, labourers and drivers, religious figures and politicians.
- *Older women are virtually non-existent*: Another way that subtle stereotypes are reinforced in tabloids (as in the mainstream media) is the tendency for older women to be virtually non-existent in coverage. Figure 2.25 shows that across all countries in which the monitoring took place, women predominate in the 20-34 year old category and become virtually non-existent in the age categories over fifty.
- *Women are more likely to be identified according to a personal relationship than men:* In contrast 18% of women sources were identified according to a personal relationship in tabloids compared to 2% of men.
- *Audiences, especially women, are unhappy about the blatant stereotyping of women in tabloids:* Some 69% women said they feel uncomfortable when they see sexual images of women in tabloids. Roughly equal proportions of men (31%) found such images entertaining as said they felt uncomfortable about them.
- *The monitoring yielded some interesting examples of more gender aware reporting.* These included women in new roles, men caring about their children, a gay man seeking out a partner in the UK, etc.
- *Audiences would like to see greater diversity in the way women and men are portrayed:* When asked what other ways they would like to see women represented, the top two choices of women and men were in professional and leadership roles. When asked how else audiences would want to see men represented they both gave as their first choice "parents." Women gave "homemakers" as their second choice and men "non traditional roles" as their second choice.
- *They would like more positive and local news:* In findings very similar to the Gender and Media Audience Study (GMAS), the study found that overwhelmingly what women and men would like more of in their daily tabloid are more positive stories, as well as more local/community news.
- *And less violence, pornography and victimisation:* When asked what they wanted to read *less* about in their tabloids, men cited violence and crime while women pointed at pornography and women as victims.

## Recommendations

Against this background, the following key recommendations emerge from the research, divided into different stakeholder groups responsible for their implementation.

*Gender and media activists:*

- Conduct campaigns to publicise the findings and devise strategies for increasing gender awareness and sensitivity in the tabloid industry.
- Broaden media literacy, consumer awareness and activism within, especially the taking up of complaints against sexist reporting through existing regulatory bodies.
- Conduct further research into the extent to which sex actually sells, and conversely, measures that can be taken to grow female audiences and markets.
- Sensitise tabloid owners and editors of the role that tabloids play in socialisation and in either perpetrating or challenging stereotypes.
- Offer support in developing HIV/AIDS, gender and diversity policies through the Media Action Plan on HIV and AIDS and Gender.
- Seek partnerships with tabloids around specific campaigns like the Sixteen Days of Activism, the 50/50 and the "Making IT work for gender justice" campaigns.

*Tabloid owners and editors*

- Adopt Codes of Conduct and policies that define sexist reporting and imaging and seek to promote more inclusive, gender-aware editorial content.
- Involve women in the drawing up of such guidelines.
- Have in-house complaints mechanisms that give readers the chance to complain and obtain redress quickly and at no cost.
- Encourage complaints of a gender nature and act on these as such cases play a significant role in prompting debate and change.

*Gender ministries and public bodies*

- Publicise the findings of research such as this and engage with tabloid owners on more progressive approaches.
- Form partnerships with tabloids in providing advisory services to women, for example on domestic violence, making use of the newspapers as well as their websites, and using this as an opportunity to empower women in the use of ICTs.

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November.

**Writers Bio**
Colleen Lowe Morna is Executive Director and Sikhonzile Ndlovu is a Researcher at Gender Links.



# Media and Gendered Violence in Canada and Romania

By Valentina Marinescu

**Abstract**

The present comparative analysis starts from the preeminence and widespread social issue of violence against women and children in the entire world and focused on two countries: Romania and Canada. Despite the fact that these countries seemed to have little in common regarding the economic, social and political life we consider that the phenomenon of violence against women and children displayed some fundamental, basic characteristics that could be similar. Moreover, a focused international comparison might shed new light in this area. The article will try to offer an answer at the following question: What is the link between the ways in which journalists re-present gender in their portrayals of violence against women and the general legal framework that regulate this issue in the case of Canada and Romania?

**Key words**

gender violence, domestic violence, child abuse, media

## Domestic violence in Canada and Romania

In 2006, *Statistics Canada Today* (2006) released a comprehensive summary about the prevalence and severity of violence against women in Canada. Findings from the report show that women are more likely than men to be the victims of the most severe forms of spousal assault, as well as spousal homicide, sexual assault and stalking. Trends in various types of violence against women, as recorded in Canadian police statistics, are mixed. Sexual assault is one of the most under-reported crimes. Fewer than 10% of sexual assaults in both survey years were reported to the police. The report found that eight out of every 10 spousal offenders were reported to police on only one occasion during the 10-year time frame. Persons accused of repeated spousal violence (those with two to four police-reported incidents of spousal violence) accounted for 18% of the total. Only 1% was considered chronic abusers and they were involved in five or more reported incidents.

According to the same report, victims' decisions to report violence to criminal justice and social services depend on a variety of factors, some of which include fear of the offender, shame and embarrassment, and regional availability of services. The majority of victims of spousal assault and over 90% of sexual assault victims did not

seek support from the criminal justice system or social services. Between 1999 and 2004, the number of female victims of spousal assault who contacted police or social services remained steady, with the same trend for the number of women accessing shelter services.

In Romania the statistics concerning the most grave offences of violence (Nicoara, Ojog 2006) show that in 2005, 40 parents were victims of the homicide committed by their children, there were 54 victims of murder committed by spouses, 29 victims of body injuries or grave body injuries committed by spouses and 11% were victims of hits that caused the death of the spouse. Referring to children victims of their parents' violence, figures show that in 2005, 23 victims of murder were recorded, out of which 15 were minors; also, 43 children were victims of parents who ill-treated them and 20 were raped by their parents. Moreover, in the same year, 5 children were the object of sexual corruption by their parents. In relation to economic violence, the same report indicates that in 2005, parents abandoned 2837 minor children. The emotional/psychological and the social forms of violence against women and children are not easy to reduce to statistics and almost impossible to punish.

The phenomenon of family violence in Romania is a "dual phenomenon," existent not only on the real plane, but also in Romanian women's and men's "collective mentality." In 2003, data resulting from national research regarding "Violence inside Families and at Working Places" (CPE 2003, 114) showed both the *real* manifestation of the family violence phenomenon for the whole studied sample of the population (n=1250 individuals).

14% from the sample declared that they had been victims of family violence during their lifetime and 8% declared the same for the last 12 months before the inquiry. The "collective mentality" was reflected in the number of persons who agreed with assertions like: "beating comes from heaven," "the husband who does not beat his wife does not truly love her," and "a wife is her husband's property."

The shape of this mixed set of relations is the way in which models of preventing and fighting violence against children and women from the West and North America, in particular, are different from those utilised in other cultures. For example, in Romania, as compared with Canada, the beating of a child by his/her parents is still considered a part of the socialisation process by the family. Education is for a large amount of the population a family issue and the "law for preventing and fighting against domestic violence" does not contain any specific regulations related to these practices, as opposed, for example, to the Youth Protection Act in Quebec (1977).

**Media's role**

In this context, an important question arises and its answer constitutes the main research objective of the comparative between Romanian and Canadian: To what degree and in what way do the mass media contribute to the preservation and consolidation of violence against women and children as a social issue?




According to the existing literature, media plays a significant role as part of the social control apparatus, reproducing as well as representing violent behaviour and social order. This media role works at two levels, that of the content of media message and that of the practices of journalism. The research literature points primarily to two effects of media images of "violent behaviour." One is the amplification of crime and violent behaviour, and the second is the creation

of anxiety and fear of violence and crime. Many scholars have emphasised the role of the media in defining and shaping problematic social reality. Sociologists studying the social construction of violent behaviour have suggested that journalism contributes to the emergence of social problems by dramatising events, managing public indignation, or engineering "moral panics" about certain types of crime and deviance (Cohen 1972; Cohen and Young 1973). It has been also argued that journalism can serve an active and important role in the process of deviancy amplification. Cohen (1972) has argued that media definitions of reality must not be viewed in isolation but as influencing and being influenced by the reality-defining practices of other social agencies, such as the police, the courts, politicians, and interest groups. The effect that attributed to the joint practices of such institutions is that of a creation of an "amplification spiral." Within this process, what was initially defined as a problem by the different agencies was subject to increased magnification.

Media texts disseminate and present gender stereotypes as real and natural human characteristics. In fact, as Connell shows, some images of gender-hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity predominate over others (Connell 1995, 615). This tendency in media texts is a matter of subordination of women, authority, aggression, while technical competence and emphasised femininity is subordinate to and defined by this hegemonic masculinity. Organised around themes of dependence, sexual receptivity, and motherhood, this femininity is characterised by "the display of sociability rather than technical competence .... and [by] fragility in mating scenes" (Connell 2002, 1987, 187).

Gender images in the media are frequently seen as delivering natural portraits of women. In fact, as most representations used in media texts, they are social constructions and depend on norms, values and experiences that in some events dominate a given society with a contextual and national character (Brown 1994; Lorber & Farrell 1991; Lorber 2005; West and Zimmerman 1987, 2002).

**The findings**

Both the qualitative and the quantitative research methods demonstrate this. Based on a "methods' triangulation" principle and for validity reasons, two main methods of data collection had been used: quantitative content analysis and qualitative content analysis. The sample of data analysed is composed by the articles dealing with violence against women and children published by twelve newspapers, six Romanian and six Canadian in the same period of time: 1 June to 31 December 2006. The Romanian newspapers were all central (edited in the country's capital – Bucharest) and distributed nationwide: Ziua (*The Day*), Romania libera (*Free Romania*), Adevarul (*The Truth*), Jurnalul National (*The National Journal*), Libertatea (*The Freedom*) and Gandul (*The Thought*). Only two Canadian newspapers were national-the *National Post* and the *Globe and Mail* - one was a provincial (from Quebec region) - *Le Soleil* - and three were local (based in Montreal) titles - *La Presse*, *LeDevoir* and the *Gazette*. The total number of daily copies for each title was included and the total number of articles analysed was up to 805 articles: 313 articles in Romania's and 492 in Canada's cases respectively.

The comparative results of Canada and Romania showed that both type of national media had defined in a "realistic manner" the violent acts against women by using figurative photos (that is, images intending to deliver the image of a real, actual fact) in 176 and 120 cases for the Canadian and Romanian sample respectively. This fact connects with the findings, which indicated that in both types of press the maximum frequency of publishing such type of article had occurred in the first ten pages of any of the newspapers analysed.

The social order reproduced in both types of national - Canadian and Romanian – newspapers made an appeal at the "primary definers of the violent situation" (the State's institutions, the Courts, the Police and the set of laws that punish and fight against this type of violent acts). Yet, the findings are in contradiction with the classical definition and place of those "primary definers" (Cohen, 1972, 1996, 2003; Katz, 1988, 1999). This constitutes a paradox from our perspective. In the period selected, the Canadian and Romanian journalists had

only named the police as an "institutional primary definer" in a given situation following the classical vein, as opposed to the other traditional "primary definers: the Court and the Laws, "which appear to be secondary definers" in the sample studied.

For the purpose of this analysis and in order to clarify this paradox, the Court and the Laws have been named "secondary indicators" instead of "secondary definers." Concerning an organisation fighting against violence, it receives the proper name of "secondary definer" given that it is funded by the Government but it is a non-profit private organisation. This outcome shows the clear differences among the media appeal to public and private in the journals of both countries.

The data of the content analysis shows that the acts, which were under the Police investigation had been covered by the newspapers in a higher ratio than those that were under judiciary's investigation (Court). On this topic, there has been published 195 Canadian and 271 Romanian articles respectively.

The main legal "pillar" invoked in both Romanian and Canadian articles in relation to images of violence against women was the "Penal Code." 273 Canadian articles and 69 materials from the Romanian sample made reference to the punishments of the violent act in accordance with the national "Penal Code" stipulations.

An important aspect to note is the way in which mass communication makes public the norms that characterise such communities (Seato, 2005). In this regard, the differences might be stated as follows: the Canadian articles had quoted a large amount of "normative" sources – the experts in violence against women and children's issues (304 quotations ), the advocates (193 quotations ), the policemen (326 quotations ), the members of the Jury (264 quotations). In the Romanian case, their quotations were set at a minimum: 115 quotations from the Policemen, 25 quotations for the Court's representatives and only one advocate quoted.

In analysing the way of "framing" the information about violent acts against women, we used the distinction between simple, short news and in-depth articles. The content analysis results indicate that both Canadian and Romanian media favored the in-depth, large presentations of acts of violence against women (387 articles in the Canadian sample and 205 articles in the Romanian one). Much more, our analysis showed that the accent on gender as the main trait of the actors involved in the violent act disregard important characteristics involved in the journalistic description (for example, age, level of education, occupation, ethnicity and others. Thus, in both types of newspapers (Romanian and Canadian) the journalists cite "gender" and the image of women to construct the notion that a person of feminine gender is the victim of violent acts. We have used the intersection of six main variables in decomposing the "social identities" of the mediatised image of a women – physical traits, psychological characterisation, socio-ethnic belonging to a group, ethnic identity, religious characterisation and "race." On these bases, the results of the quantitative analysis pointed out a relevant similitude in the hierarchy of main axes of women's represented images within the media, both in Canadian and Romanian cases.

- a focus on the physical dimension of women's identities in building their general image, both national media stressing the belonging of the victim to "gender": feminine;
- the mediatisation through newspapers of the ethnic dimension in the case of women's images. In this case we count 157 cases in the Canadian newspapers and 63 cases in the Romanian ones; and
- the minimum use of religious affiliation and the reference to "race" – for the Romanian and Canadian articles (60 women were religiously characterised and 84 had been racially differentiated, while in the Romanian case, 9 women were religiously characterised and, respectively, 2 cases in which their presentation inside an article comprised also the reference to "race").

In the qualitative comparative analysis we establish some "thematic structures" of the texts that could offer us some indications about the elements used by the journalists in re-constructing acts of women and children. We had differentiated among some sets words that

could be considered as "clues" of the macro-structures of the Romanian and Canadian newspapers' texts:

- words that denote the actors involved in acts of women and children; and
- words that constitute the normative vocabulary"- that is, those words that refer to the state's institution, the laws and the ways of punishing women and children acts. According to van Dijk (1988:228) the biased and "stereotype-laden" character of a title is particularly true of all information and discourse that presupposes variable and conflicting, social and political attitudes.

One important difference between Romanian and Canadian ways of presenting the issue of violence against women was found in the analysis of the articles' headlines. Thus, some of the elements that could comprise it were mentioned only in 13 occasions within the Romanian titles, while in the Canadian case they were recorded 116 times. From here, the lexical references at the legal aspects related to the women and children in the Canadian newspapers covered all the stages of punishing and fighting such acts. Words like "the court", "the process", "the policemen", "the law-expert" and "prison" plus "the jail" had built a Canadian legal world more rich and easy to understand than that made only from "prison", "police" and "law" in the Romanian case.

Regarding the identity of the individuals involved in the violent act, the analysis of the articles' headlines showed a new difference between the two ways of covering the social issue of violence against women. The Romanian newspapers published articles with a pre-eminent "child-centric" character (65 occurrences of words that were derived from the noun "child"). In the Canadian case there was recorded a "feminine-biased" type of headlines ("woman", "wife", "girl", "mother" were the words which recorded the greater usage within the Canadian titles analysed: 120 occurrences, as compared with the words enclosed in the "child" family - 40 occurrences).

The ways in which journalists topically assigned the positions and role of the women and children in the headlines were as such interesting "indicators" of their subordinate role within the women and children acts depicted in the newspapers. That way of constructing the headlines had implicitly sent stereotypes related to their first-degree (and socially accepted) positions of helpless victims of the violent acts. Semantically, this common element found in the case of two different types of newspapers also suggested that women and children would have less the role of responsible agents in such events. In other words, both Canadian and Romanian journalists stressed and reconstructed the same "biased" and negative images of women and children as passive actors involved in acts of violence, that is, the role of "perfect victim" that was socially ascribed to them.

**Conclusion**

Dobash (1979) traces the origin of violence against women in the structure of the patriarchal family and points out that this is a form of male control and domination within a social hierarchy. Dworkin (1981) places this hierarchy within the context of the "seven tenets of male supremacy." The second tenet is that "men are physically stronger than women and, for that reason, have dominion over them" (Dworkin 1981, 14). Along with that dominion, she adds, is the capacity to terrorise a whole class of persons (the third tenet) and the right to own women (tenet five) (Dworkin 1981, 14-19). We can assume that our analysis reinforces the above-mentioned theoretical considerations.

Also, our analysis was, to a certain degree, in accordance with the existing literature, the results pointing out that the "reproduction" of social order had deployed both local and transnational traits. In both countries, the reciprocal relations between the state and the media contribute to the projection of a specific social order in relation to violent acts, producing what is nationally thinkable about the nature of crime and strategies to control it. At the transnational level, both media used the police as "primary definers" of the violent acts, but we noticed significant differences related to the reconstruction within the media texts for the practices of the significant social agencies involved in punishing acts of violence against women and children– the courts, politicians (Cohen 1972). The journalistic treatments of raw information seemed to "obey" the same editorial

logic that assign to these kind of texts second-rank place in the hierarchy of news, a sort of half-hard news. This conclusion was in line with the observation of existing literature, according to which (Dowler, Fleming, Muzzatti, 2006):

"The portrayal of crime and justice is blurred, especially within news content, in which the most serious and violent crimes are given en entertaining angle and presented as 'hard' news, even though the facts are often distorted and misrepresented."

Despite the fact that both Canadian and Romanian journalists made an equal appeal at the general legal national framework regulating that domain, we assessed that this type of information was not "adequate" to help the ordinary reader in changing his/her perception about the legal punishments applied in that case. That is, on the basis of the frequencies recorded at this time it was obvious that neither the Canadian not the Romanian public could know exactly the specific law for preventing and fighting against violence against women and children. Only in four cases for the Romanian sample we recorded the mentioning of law no 217/2003 that is devoted to preventing and fighting against violence against women and children. Moreover, little mention occurred of the steps an individual could follow after such an act took place. From here, despite the differences they displayed in the functioning of the two legal and social work systems, we could suppose that, irrespectively of their geographical, social, ethical or national dependencies, the journalists would expressed a sort of social non-involvement in reporting this type of news, a sort of "self-assumed" neutrality.

**Writers Bio**
Valentina Marinescu, Ph. D, Reader at the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work – Bucharest University (Bucharest, Romania). She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in media and society, and methods of researching mass communication. Her interests lie in media and communication studies in Eastern Europe, particularly in Romania, and in gender studies.

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## Enhancing Young Women's Participation in ICT-Related Development

By George Mwika Kayange

Participants at the Civil Society ICT4D Workshop held on 21-22 January 2008 in Lilongwe, Malawi, unanimously agreed, once again, that women and girls were generally not given a chance to participate in issues pertaining to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) due largely to some inherent stereotyping in society towards the womenfolk.

The workshop, familiarly dominated by the men folk, therefore recommended that stakeholders develop and review strategies to encourage girls and women to participate in public life, including in ICT-related development endeavours.

The participants further noted that cultural and social attitudes often discriminate against women's participation in the fields of science and technology and consequently this limits their opportunities in the area of ICT. They observed that economically, most women are not independent and since the use of ICT goes hand-in-hand with adequate financial resources, accessing ICTs by young women is generally difficult. On the educational front, it was noted that the current inequitable allocation of educational resources favours boys and men. This entrenches marginalisation of girls and women.

Ironically, none of these concerns seemed to be fresh, as they have popped up repeatedly at various other forums within and outside the country. In fact, some of the concerns raised are already reflected in the country's draft National Youth Policy.

The document reads in part: "This policy therefore intends to provide young women with adequate information, education, income generating activity (IGA) skills and such other skills which will effectively enable young women to be more self reliant and able to make informed choices. Sensitisation of the male folk on women's rights and gender is paramount."

Yet after more than ten years of advocating for cabinet approval of the draft policy document, very little appears to have been achieved with regards to addressing the place of young women in national development initiatives, including those that are ICT-related, despite the National Youth Council of Malawi (NYCOM) implementing a computer training programme for youths. NYCOM is mandated to ensure the effective implementation, coordination and evaluation of various programmes affecting the youth and instill national pride in them, as enshrined in the National Youth Council Act.

"When we provided computer training for the youth, we did our best to balance the numbers of boys and girls who would then become trainers of trainers (ToT) in their respective communities. Surprisingly, we have realised that there are still more boys than girls patronising the youth centres," said NYCOM Acting Executive Director, Aubrey Chibwana.

So among the strategies proposed, the workshop participants advocated for intensive ICT training programmes targeting women and girls after noting that they tend to adapt slowly to new technologies and suffer from an inferiority complex, making ICT a male domain.

The workshop, organised by a local youth NGO dubbed the Young Advocates for the Advancement of ICT-related Development (Y.A.A.ICT-D), sought to raise awareness about the crucial issues surrounding the development of an information society.

"Regarding the development of an information society, we are essentially looking at ICT policies, and ICT strategies that the government is putting in place. The role of the civil society organisations at that workshop, therefore, was to ensure that these strategies do reflect the local context," said Y.A.A.ICT-D Executive Director, Kenneth Msiska.

The establishment of the Y.A.A.ICT-D four years ago augured well with the general consensus that the involvement of today's youth in both decision-making and in implementation of all aspects of development – including ICT-related initiatives – is critical to the long-term success in achieving Millennium Development Goals, according to United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

A rough overview of the youth NGOs in Malawi indicates that the average group has over 65% males. Enhancing female participation is therefore one of the priorities of the gender issues for those youth groups that have identified gender issues as a priority.

In addition to their intellectual contribution, they bring unique perspectives that need to be taken into account, which not only have a significant bearing on all forms of gender imbalances but also need to be addressed in development planning. And when experts and other stakeholders talk of development planning today, it also includes strategically incorporating such issues into the draft National ICT for Development (ICT4D) Policy.

To emphasise the importance of ICT to national development, President Bingu wa Mutharika promised Malawians, on his return from the Connect Africa Summit held in Kigali, Rwanda from 29-30 October 2007, to develop policies that favour greater use of ICTs in various sectors of the economy.

Currently, the draft Malawi National ICT Strategic Plan is directed at achieving the mission of transforming Malawi into an information-rich, knowledge-based and technology-driven high-income economy and society, and clearly sets out key steps towards the realisation of the Malawi vision for ICT, and one of these steps is the establishment of an enabling ICT Policy.

Incidentally, Y.A.A.ICT-D is among the members of the National ICT Working Group (NICTWG), a multi-sectoral national taskforce mandated to steer the consultative process of putting in place the National ICT4D Policy.

"As Y.A.A.ICT-D, we are there to provide input in the three areas that we are working in vis-à-vis gender, the rights of the youth and how ICTS can be deployed in the societies. What we believe is that we cannot talk of ICTs without involving young people since they are the biggest consumers themselves," said Msiska, adding there was also need to pay particular attention to the needs of girls to strike gender balance in the use of ICTS.

The draft National ICT4D Policy acknowledges that currently ICT services and products do not effectively cater for the youth, women and other disadvantaged groups, therefore requiring that Malawi's entry into the information age will demand rapid extension of access to ICT to all sections of the society.

In order to build the capacity of women, youth and other disadvantaged groups to implement ICT initiatives, the document proposes to "promote access to national ICT Development Fund to finance the development of and smooth running of ICT youth organisations in Malawi."

It also recommends donor agencies, NGOs and other development partners to help in ICT capacity-building initiatives, and encourages Public and Private Partnerships (PPPs) to facilitate the roll-out of community-based ICT youth initiatives.

However, as experience elsewhere has shown, making available ICT services and products alone cannot work, but rather inspiring and empowering the target communities with appropriate skills to effectively use the available ICT services and products. Hence, to ensure

active participation of all Malawians "including women, youth and persons with disabilities" in developing the information society, the document lays down a list of strategies including imparting "ICT skills to girls, boys and women of Malawi."

It is clear, therefore, that there have been significant efforts to enhance participation of youth, particularly young women, in both the draft National Youth Policy as well as the draft National ICT4D Policy. The remaining challenge, however, is to turn policy rhetoric into action. Some of the key members of the NICTWG agree with the observation that articulation of policies in many other fields apart from the ICT4D has not matched with implementation or operationalisation of the same on the ground. The same scenario could remain true as regards implementation of the draft National ICT4D policy when it finally gets the cabinet's approval.

The Department of Information Systems and Technology (DISTMS), under the Ministry of Information and Civic Education, is responsible for coordination of the implementation of the policy and currently hosts the secretariat for the NICTWG.

Government Wide Area Network (GWAN) Manager at DISTMS, Patrick Machika, conceded that putting in place a policy document was one thing, but operationalising it was another, even though he was quick to pledge the ministry's commitment in ensuring that the policy achieves its set goals when it is approved. He revealed that a pilot project, for example, was in the pipeline to soon establish telecentres in the district of Mangochi to be run by a group of women with funding from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The project will, however, be coordinated by the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) under the same ministry.

"What I feel should be done in order to enhance active participation of young women in ICT-related development is to improve our coordination with various stakeholders. For example, we are already planning to build strong links with the Ministry of Gender, Child Welfare and Development as well as with NGOs that are working in the area of women development," Machika said.

He also added that there was also need to first draw lessons from other countries that could provide useful case studies before embarking on implementation. He said in South Korea, for example, he saw a project where housewives were being trained in IT, after noting that children – including girls – spent more time at home with their mothers than with their teachers in school.

However, Machika noted that there was a beacon of hope as regards enhancing participation of young women in ICT as more girls than boys were now enrolling in various IT related courses, including at the National College of IT (NACIT), one of the most renowned and accredited IT colleges in the country, which is also run under DISTMS.

"There has been an improved intake in numbers of girls against boys at NACIT. In the past three years, we have seen an increase of about 60 % for girls enrolling in our various IT programmes at diploma, advanced diploma and degree levels. We think this is a good indicator that we are slowly breaking the [gender] stereotype," he said.

22-year-old Yamikani Jambo, who will be completing her degree in Computing and Information Systems at NACIT this year, said high costs coupled with the gender stereotypes were among the main factors, which used to contribute towards the low intake of girls into IT-related courses in the past.

"I think parents are now beginning to [slowly] realise that they can invest some money in their daughters too, which wasn't the case before. IT courses are very expensive in this country. My parents are spending K260, 000 (about 1900 USD) for tuition, 650 Pounds for registration, besides spending on travel and other related costs since this is not a boarding institution. Not many parents would want to spend that much on girls especially if there were boys around," she said.

But YAAICT-D's Msiska concurred with Machika that there was need to improve coordination with various stakeholders including the women themselves if implementation of the draft Policy was to be effective,

while NYCOM's Chibwana suggested there was need to begin with homes first before undertaking any programme.

"The first step is to ensure that everybody in Malawi owns the ICT policy and that the people are aware of what is contained in the document so that it is easy for different stakeholders to monitor the implementation process," said Msiska after the workshop that his organisation held for civil society organisations.

"Indeed, there is need for collective efforts. But we must first begin with dialogue at household level. Parents at home must be encouraging girls to play with the PC too rather than just leaving it to the boys. They must also begin to encourage girls to be as active as boys at the youth centres in their communities," said Chibwana.

Whichever the case or argument, however, the general consensus is that the policy documents – both the youth and the ICT4D policies – will continue to remain irrelevant unless stakeholders, including government, exert more efforts in ensuring that they are not just approved at cabinet level, but also that whatever strategies are contained in these documents regarding enhanced participation of marginalised groups are translated into real actions on the ground.

**Writers Bio**
George Mwika Kayange is media consultant and Director of the Child Rights Information and Documentation Centre (www.cridoc.net)

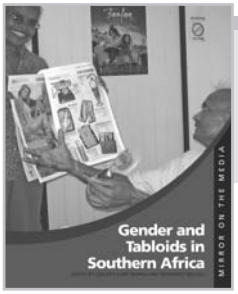
## Gender and Media (GEM) Summit and Awards
## Whose News, Whose Views
## Critical Citizens, Responsive Media
## 10-12 August 2008 (TBC)

The Gender and Media Southern Africa (GEMSA) Network, in partnership with Gender Links (GL) and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), will be holding the third Gender and Media (GEM) Summit from 10-12 August 2008 in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Under the banner, *"Whose news, Whose views Critical citizens, Responsive media"* the Summit will include parallel seminars on gender and the media in following categories:

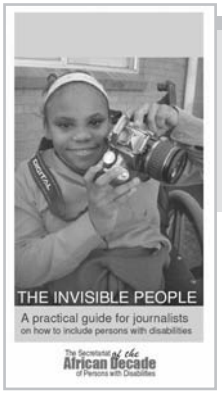
- Creating a critical citizenry: media literacy; reading the media.
- Consumer activism: alerts; complaints; media regulation.
- Engaging with media consumers: audience surveys; direct engagement with consumers.
- Policy and practise: are public mandates being fulfilled; participation in community radio.
- Gender and media diversity: GMDC; gender in media content.
- Research and monitoring: the findings of the Gender Links tabloid research; advertising research.
- Media training: Creating media literate students; internships.
- Media activism**:** I stories; digital stories.

The Summit is being coordinated by the GEMSA Secretariat based at the offices of Gender Links in Johannesburg. For more information on the Summit contact:
Tel.: +27 11 622 6597
Fax: +27 11 622 8674
E-mail: admin@gemsa.org.za
Website: www.gemsa.org.za




**Mirror on the Media: Gender and Tabloids in Southern Africa**
Edited by Colleen Lowe Morna and Sikhonzile Ndlovu

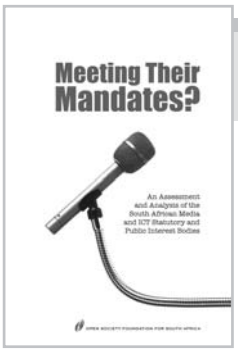
Press freedom and the discovery of new markets among the lower paid working classes previously not reached by the written media have led to a mushrooming of newspapers that are not only tabloid in form but also in content- visual; sensational; superstitious; feeding off local celebrity news and scandals. They reach millions of people. Timely, provocative and well-researched, this sixth issue of Mirror on the Media by Gender Links and partner organisations is the first comprehensive study not just of gender and tabloids in Southern Africa, but of this phenomenon in the region more broadly.




**A Practical Guide for Journalists on How to Include Persons with Disabilities**
Secretariat of the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities

This guideline for journalists was developed to help support and promote the human rights of persons with disabilities through media. The manual discusses key disability issues, key messages and principles for journalists wanting to support the human rights of Africans with disabilities. The manual also deals with terminology. According to the publishers, media "can help the some 80 million persons with disabilities in Africa that are often discriminated against and excluded from schools, work opportunities and health services, to become more visible in their societies."

Download from http://www.africandecade.org/




**Meeting Their Mandates**
Open Society Foundation

In 2005, the Open Society Foundation forSouth Africa embarked on a project to analyse and assess the degree to which media statutory bodies in South Africa were fulfilling their mandates, to assess their contribution to media diversity and enhancing access to media and ICTs. This report provides and overview of what the research found, as well as a review legislation, regulations and policy relevant to the provision of public communications. It aims to add to current debates on the independence of media in South Africa as well as issues of access to media for a diverse range of voices and toward the promotion of good media practice in general.

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**Media Legislation in Africa: A Comparative Legal Survey**
by Guy Berger

The work is the result of a research undertaken, with the support of UNESCO, by a team of African scholars coordinated by Professor Guy Berger, head of the School of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa. The study includes an overview of the existing media legislation in ten multi-party democratic countries in Africa and a comparative analysis, whilst also putting the legislation in perspective with regional and international standards and best-practices in the field of media law conducive to freedom of expression.

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# CONCEPT AND EDITORIAL GUIDELINES

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**The Gender and Media Diversity Journal (GMDJ)**
**Concept and Editorial guidelines**

**What?**

The Gender and Media Diversity Journal is the biennial journal of the Gender and Media Diversity Centre (GMDC). The journal is intellectual but not academic. It provides up-to-date and cutting edge information on media diversity in Southern Africa and the space for the dissemination of research findings and projects; case studies; campaigns, policy developments; and opinion and debate on media practice in the region.

Each journal focuses on a different thematic areas identified in consultation with the GMDC advisory group. Inaugural issues (before the establishment of the GMDC) focused on the Global Gender Media Monitoring Project and the second on the Gender and Media Summit held in September 2006 under the banner "Media Diversity: Good For Business, Good for Democracy." Future issues will tackle themes such as quality and professionalism in the media: the case for new media; non-journalistic media; children's media; and the outcomes of the Media Action Plan on HIV AIDS and Gender involving editor's forums and media development NGOs across the region.

**Why?**

Despite its mission of "giving voice to the voiceless", the media worldwide is heavily biased towards covering the views of those in power, an elite group often defined according to race, ethnicity, class and gender. In Southern Africa, where democracy is a relatively new and fragile phenomenon, the media are still largely state dominated. The concept of a public media is weak. Albeit to different degrees, private and community media face political, organisational and financial challenges. Overall, whether in the public or private sphere, media ownership is concentrated in a few hands. The voices of those most affected by policies and unequal power relations in society are seldom heard even though they constitute the majority of news consumer population. Failure to understand and respond to audiences in all their diversity is also bad for business.

The journal aims to:

- Develop and share a body of knowledge on media diversity in Southern Africa.
- Promote more probing, analytical and contextual journalism.
- Share best practices on how to achieve greater diversity in media content, ownership and market share.
- Contribute to greater media literacy and responsiveness among ordinary citizens- women and men – in Southern Africa.

Each journal will contain:

- Introduction – editorial and news briefs
- Thematic focus
- Media watch
- Reviews and reports of programmes, projects, research, policy and development related to gender and diversity in the media.
- Opinion and letters.

The Southern Africa Media Diversity Journal targets media workers and owners, policy-makers, researchers, lecturers, student journalists, activists and those individuals and organisations working towards media diversity in the region.

Contributions are invited and solicited from groups and individuals such as these and commissioned by the editor.

**When?**

The journal comes out twice a year in September and March.

**How to contribute**

For further information and to request full contributors guidelines please contact

Gender Links
editor@genderlinks.org.za
Tel: + 27 11 622 2877

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