Media, Information and Communication 9



Journalists cover the Gender and News Summit in Tanzania in 2018. Photo courtesy of Aikha Kimaro

KEY POINTS

- The *Gender and Media Progress Study* (GMPS) remains the largest and longest longitudinal research study on gender equality in the news media in Southern Africa, spanning from 2003-2020. The 2020 GMPS monitored 18630 news items over an entire month.
- The proportion of women sources represents the most important measure of giving a voice to women.
- The GMPS shows a paltry increase in women sources in the media, from 17% in the 2003 *Gender and Media Baseline Study* (GMBS) to 19% in 2010 GMPS, to 20% in the 2015 GMPS, and just 21% in the 2020 GMPS.
- Variations exist across countries in the proportion of women as news sources in Southern African media, ranging from 16% in Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Tanzania and Zambia, to 31% in Seychelles: all still well short of the 50% target.
- At just 2%, topics on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) rank among the least covered. Gender Based Violence (GBV) accounts for half of SRHR coverage. At 2% each, sexual diversity, harmful practices, and menstrual health are the least covered SRHR topics.
- Regional media prioritises other topics, including economy (19%), social topics (15%) sports (12%), politics and government news (11%).
- Across all topics, women's voices dominate only in news about gender equality (52%).
- Spokespeople and experts continue to comprise the majority of sources in regional news.
- An analysis of COVID-19 news coverage shows that women's voices accounted for 26% of those interviewed as sources.
- Online GBV increasingly hinders freedom of expression in online spaces, with women journalists disproportionately affected.

Introduction

If George Orwell's famous line about the media is true and "the people will believe what the media tells them they believe," then those seeking gender equality need to continue to push the Southern African media sector to do better. While there has been some progress in both what journalists report on, and how they do their newsgathering, journalism in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) continues to lag behind other regions in its contribution to reporting on gender equality and equity.

Regional media remains rife with problematic and harmful gender disparities in news media content as well as within media institutional structures and practices. This includes sexual harassment within newsrooms. Online violence against women journalists is also on the rise. Meanwhile, media content continues to curtail or ignore women's right to freedom of expression and opinion because women's voices seldom make it to the news. "Tabloidisation" of the media, weak ethical practices, entrenched male dominance, violations of women's rights, and failure to implement gender mainstreaming continue to hinder efforts to achieve gender equality in and through the media.[1]



Egyptian journalist Shahira Amin and Libyan journalist Fatma Ghandour conduct media monitoring during a Women Peace and Security workshop in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 2016. Photo: Tarisai Nyamweda

Severe gender disparities still abound in SADC news media

Findings from the 2020 *Gender and Media Progress Study* (GMPS) show stagnation or regression in progress towards attaining gender equality in the media. The struggle towards reaching equality within media institutions is increasingly less about the numbers (as numbers edge towards equality in most countries) of women entering the profession and more about the pervasiveness of sexism and misogyny - including cyber misogyny.[2] Additionally, women continue to struggle to attain and retain leadership roles within media institutional structures.

Women's relative underrepresentation in mainstream news media has carried over into online news as digital media platforms grow in importance. The GMPS included this area of work for the first time in 2020. Sadly, challenges of news media sexism, gender stereotyping, and gender bias seem intractable across time, space and content delivery platforms.

Media in Southern Africa suffers from similar sustainability challenges emerging in the industry across the world. Cost cutting in a bid to keep newsrooms afloat affects priorities in news coverage and institutional practices. This issue became more critical in the time of COVID-19, with many media houses requesting financial and government support to survive. The pan-

[1] Media Institute of Southern Africa. 2021. Southern Africa press freedom report 2019-2020. Media Institute of Southern Africa. Harare. Available at https://data.misa.org/api/files/1619950689792O1gkm18usemy.pdf, accessed on 18 June 2021.
[2] Daniels, G. and Nyamweda T. 2018. Glass Ceiling: Women in South Africa media houses. Gender Links. Johannesburg

demic created many fault lines in the sector, especially regarding the rights of media workers, the right to freedom of expression, and industry sustainability.

"COVID-19 temporary measures and laws on lockdowns dented freedom of expression gains that had been made over the years," noted a 2020 report from Internews on freedom of expression in Southern Africa. *Titled Things* will never be the same again, it found that, "if there is no financial intervention or adoption of sustainable revenue solutions in SADC, print media that were already in financial dire straits before the pandemic, will close their doors permanently. The pandemic saw countries invoking shutdowns that restricted movement and, in some cases, resulted in companies closing causing loss of jobs and income and impacting on media revenues from newspapers sales and advertising."[3]

During the COVID-19 pandemic, journalists also faced the challenging task of gathering and distributing accurate information, risking their lives to work on the frontlines to collect and disseminate vital public health news. Despite this central role during a pandemic, media practitioners also grappled with the impact of COVID-19 on their lives and work. Throughout the crisis, SADC citizens increasingly saw information and communication technologies as an opportunity and lifeline to access and disseminate news.

Thus, in many ways 2020 provided a timely and urgent opportunity to reflect and take stock of progress made by the news media in representation and portrayal of women in Southern Africa and beyond through gender and media monitoring. This important initiative provides gender and media activists with reliable data to strengthen their work towards a more gender equal and responsive media.

This chapter reflects on these points, highlighting both progress and setbacks made in fulfilling the targets set under the SADC Gender Protocol. It will focus on the findings of the GMPS, especially those related to SRHR and COVID-19, which fit into the #VoiceandChoice theme of this year's Barometer.

The GMPS has tracked progress on women's representation and portrayal in the Southern Africa media at five-year intervals since the first *Gender and Media Baseline Study* in 2003. It builds on and complements the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), a larger research initiative that takes the pulse of selected indicators of gender in the news media globally, including women's presence in relation to men, gender bias, and stereotypes in news stories and other content.

Table 9.1: GMPS comparison to GMMP

Gender and Media Progress Study	Global Media Monitoring Project
Southern African focus	Global focus
Monitoring over one month	Monitoring over one day
Online monitoring	Paper based (final monitoring uploaded onto online database)

Source: Gender Links.

Table 9.1 illustrates the key differences between the GMPS and GMMP studies. Notably, the GMPS monitors media across the SADC region over the span of an entire month, while the GMMP monitors media around the world over one day. Undertaking both studies around the same time provided an opportunity for gender and media activists in the region and beyond to reflect on progress made in the representation and portrayal of women, which represents one of the 12 critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action.

[3] Internews. 2020. "Things will never be the same again": COVID-19 effects on freedom of expression in Southern Africa, 2020. Johannesburg. Internews. Available at https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/internews_effects_of_covid19_on_freedom_of_expression_in_select_sadc_countries_2.pdf, accessed 3 July 2021

A central question in both studies is whether women's voices have increased or decreased over time and whether the portrayal of women has changed. Importantly, stories on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) ascertained representation of this critical issue in the media. They focused on nine thematic areas, including menstrual health, maternal health, safe abortion, teenage pregnancies, comprehensive sexuality education, sexual diversity, GBV, HIV and AIDS, and harmful practices.

Table 9.2: GMPS summary

AREA	2003	2010	2015 overall	2020 overall	Highest country	Lowest country	2020 Global[4]
Who speaks in news?	**% W**	**% W**	**% W**	**% W**	**% W**	**% W**	**% W**
Overall	17	19	20	21	28	6	24
Private media	N/A	19	18	22	43	15	
Public media	N/A	20	24	21	35	16	
Community	N/A	22	21	20	67	0	
Who reports?	**% W**	**% W**	**% W**	**% W**	**% W**	**% W**	**% W**
All reporters	N/A	27	29	37	74	23	37
All presenters				55	88	37	
Topic of reporting	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**
Economics		12	17	19	28	12	17
Politics		19	21	11	24	4	16
Sports		18	17	12	26	4	
Social				16	31	10	
Who speaks on what?	**% W**	**% W**	**% W**	**% W**	**% W**	**% W**	**% W**
Economics	10	12	18	19	31	0	21
Political stories	9	13	14	14	25	6	18
Gender equality				51	`100	0	
SRHR	N/A	N/A	N/A	43	83	0	
Social				12	41	16	
Sports	8	12	13	12	31	0	
COVID-19				**% W**	**% W**	**% W**	**% W**
Sources							
Women sources on stories that mention COVID-19	N/A	N/A	N/A	26	44	16	
Topics related to COVID-19				**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**
Health	N/A	N/A	N/A	34	54	21	
Economy	N/A	N/A	N/A	25%	37	7	
Social	N/A	N/A	N/A	18	32	8	
Politics	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	10	0	
Sports	N/A	N/A	N/A	7	16	0	
SRHR	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	6	0	
Origin of stories	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**
International	N/A	22	16	12	19	2	
Africa/SADC	N/A	8	8	6	18	1	
National	N/A	42	44	56	77	39	
Local/community	N/A	18	28	25	30	4	

Source: GMPS 2015, GMMP 2020.

Table 9.2 illustrates the key findings from the GMPS studies over the years, including the most recent in 2020. This chapter will highlight and review several of these in further detail.

[4] World Association of Christian Communicators. 2020. 6th Global Media Monitoring Project highlight of findings. Available at https://whomakesthenews.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/GMMP-2020.Highlights_FINAL.pdf, accessed on 15 July 2021.

Background: Global efforts for gender equality in and through media *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*

Last year marked the 25th anniversary of The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPA), an outcome of the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women adopted by 189 countries as a visionary roadmap for achieving gender equality. The BDPA declared the media one of 12 critical areas of concern for the advancement and empowerment of women. The Platform for Action calls for commitment to end sexism and sexist stereotyping in and through the media. Thus, the need to advance gender equality in and through the media and information and communications technology (ICT) has been at the core of gender and media advocacy work since the 1995 conference through its two strategic objectives:

- Strategic objective 1: Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication.
- Strategic objective 2: Promote a balanced and non-stereotypical portrayal of women in the media.

Since 1995, other international efforts have reaffirmed the importance of attaining gender equality in and through the media and ICTs. Several legal and normative instruments have stimulated this goal, including:

The Global Media Monitoring Project



The GMMP is a one-day voluntary global monitoring project that has taken place every five years since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. It represents the world's longest-running and most extensive research on gender in the news media.

Researchers designed the GMMP to capture a snapshot of gender on one "ordinary" news day for the world's news media. They defined this as a day during which the news agenda contains a run-of-the-mill mix of stories, everyday articles on politics, economy, social issues, crime and other issues. Events during the 2020 GMMP year were somewhat extraordinary; beginning in late 2019 and intensifying during the year as the COVID-19 pandemic ravaged the planet. This sixth installation of the GMMP research thus offered a unique opportunity to scrutinise gender in media coverage during a global catastrophe: a time marked by a worldwide health crisis and the intensified inequalities accompanying it.

The Beijing Declaration provides a roadmap to achieving gender equality in and through the media

GMMP teams in 116 countries monitored 30 172 stories published in newspapers, broadcast on radio and television, and disseminated on news websites and via news media tweets in 2251 news outlets.

The global coordinator, World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), released some preliminary results in March 2021 and launched its full report in July 2021.

Table 9.3: 2020 GMMP research in Africa[5]

	2015	2020
Number of African countries participating	32	43
Women in the news	22%	22%
Women sources in politics and government	16%	18%
Women sources economy	19%	19%
Women sources sciences and health	37%	30%
Women sources social and legal	26%	23%
Women sources crime and violence	28%	24%
Women sources celebrity, arts, media and sports	15%	17%
Women sources other	22%	25%
Women are reporters	35%	27%

Source: GMPS 2015, GMMP 2020.

Table 9.3 shares some information from the 2020 GMMP for African countries, which shows negligible progress on most indicators since the previous study in 2015. In Africa, women once again made up only 22% of sources in the news monitored, even though this time around the study included an additional 11 countries on the continent. Other indicators saw gender equality decreases, including women as sources in science and health; social and legal; on crime and violence; and women as reporters. In SADC, the GMPS found an increase of one percentage point on women sources in the media from 20% to 21% since 2015."[6]

Global Alliance on Media and Gender

The Global Alliance on Media and Gender (GAMAG) is a "global movement to promote gender equality in and through media and ICTs in all formats and locations and across different forms of ownership."

In 2020, GAMAG and its members assessed progress, gaps and opportunities on gender and the media 25 years after Beijing and five years into the implementation of Agenda 2030.[7] GAMAG also submitted findings to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women for a report presented to the UN Human Rights Council in June 2020. The report provided a picture of the situation of violence against women journalists, which has increased dramatically - both offline and online. The reports discussed the structural conditions that enable GBV against women journalists, and explored how such violence affects the collective right to freedom of expression. The report, however, focused mainly on Asia, Europe and Latin America.

[5] World Association of Christian Communicators, (2020). Global Media Monitoring Project Africa results. World Association of Christian Communicators. Toronto Available at https://worldassociation-my.sharepoint.com/:x:/r/personal/sm_waccglobal_org/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7BBF70182A-6F1C-49FD-9A9E-86658601DB4F%7D&file=GMMP%20Report_%20Africa%20-%202021-05-15.xlsx&action=default&mobileredirect=true, accessed on 16 July 2021.

[6] Gender Links, (2020). Gender and Media Progress Study. Preliminary findings. Gender Links. Johannesburg. Available at https://datastudio.google.com/u/0/reporting/ee53fd80-a91a-46e0-9cc3-f8c7f352d484/page/eKwT?s=tim9YL3OEew, accessed on 16 July 2021.

[7] Global Alliance on Media and Gender, (2020). GAMAG assessments of progress, gaps and opportunities on gender, media and ICTs 25 years after the Beijing Platform for Action for the Advancement of Women and five years into the implementation of Agenda 2030. Available at https://gamag.net/2020/01/22/beijing-25-gender-media-and-icts/ , accessed 26 June 2020

Step it Up Media Compact

In March 2016, UN Women fostered a partnership with leading media houses for the Step it Up for Gender Equality Media Compact ("Step it Up"). It set out to develop concrete actions for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda with a focus on gender equality and women's rights issues on two fronts: 1) in their reporting, disrupting stereotypes and biases and 2) in increasing the number of women in the media, including in leadership and decision-making functions.[8]

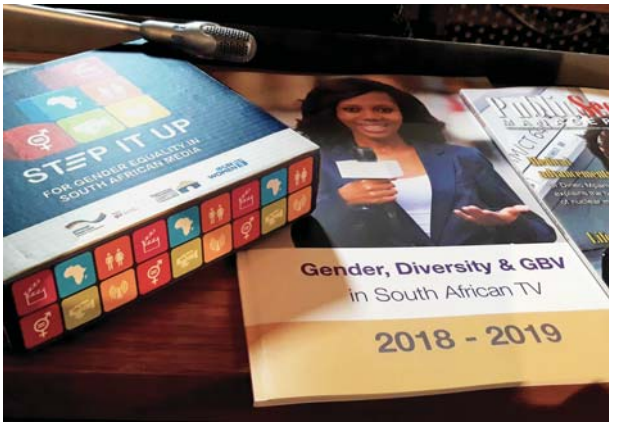
Step it Up encourages media houses, at minimum, to:

- Champion women's rights and gender equality issues through articles, features and news coverage;
- Ensure production of high-quality stories with a focus on gender equality and women's rights, with a minimum of two per month;
- Ensure inclusion of women as sources in stories produced, aiming for gender parity, including across diverse subjects such as business, technology, science and engineering;
- Adopt a gender-sensitive code of conduct on reporting;
- Ensure guidelines for gender-sensitive reporting in orientation and training of staff members;
- Enable equality in newsrooms through gender-sensitive reporting and by ensuring women journalists receive the same opportunities as their male colleagues and can cover diverse subjects from politics to business, science, sports and technology, while encouraging male journalists to also cover diverse issues, including women's rights and gender equality stories; and
- Ensure women journalists have mentors and guidance for career advancement.

In South Africa, UN Women and GIZ, a German development agency, through its Partnerships for Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls programme (PfP), support the Step It Up project. It mainly aims to facilitate behavioural change of key media organisations and practitioners. In 2020, the campaign launched a voluntary Statement of Commitment for Gender Equality in South African Media. In partnership with the media and entertainment industry, civil society, government and regulatory bodies, the campaign aims to actively fight GBV and promote gender equality in South Africa by calling on the media and entertainment industry to uphold the following three key commitments:

1) Gender-sensitive reporting;
2) Un-stereotyping entertainment and story-telling; and
3) Creating an equal and safe space behind the scenes.

Voluntarily signing the Statement of Commitment hopefully motivates South African news and entertainment media organisations and practitioners to reflect and take on the roles and responsibilities that come with the influence they hold. The campaign hopes to guide the way for signatories to become a positive force in the country's struggle with gender inequality and GBV.



Step It Up for Gender Equality in South African Media information pack.
Photo: Tarisai Nyamweda

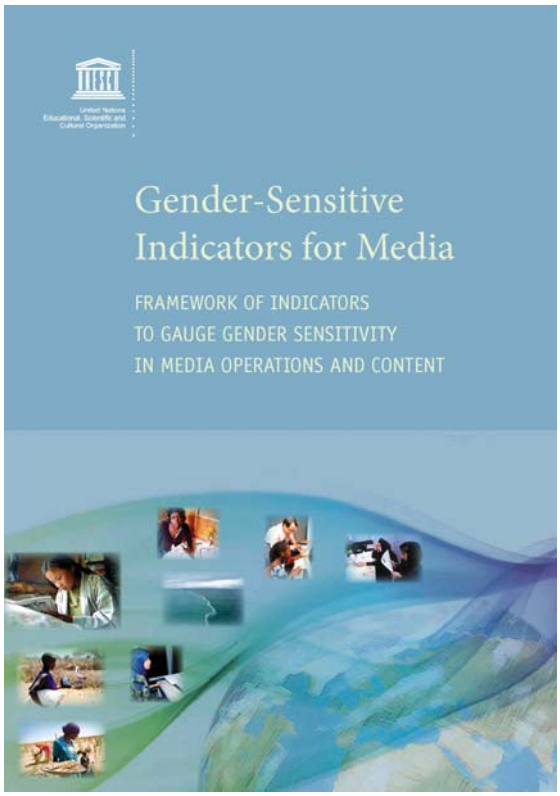
[8] UN WOMEN, (2018). UN Women Media Compact. A partnership to advance women's empowerment with and through the news media. Available at http://www.unwomen.org/en/get-involved/step-it-up/media-compact#sthash.INLxFHhx.dpuf, accessed 1 July 2020

#PayMeEqual campaign[9]

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) launched a global campaign called #PayMeEqual that urges media across the world to conduct pay audits in their newsrooms and to act to tackle the gender pay gap. The campaign will survey and document the gender pay gap in journalism at a national level and support its affiliates in their call for equal pay.

Individual journalists can also use this survey to compare their own wage to those holding similar positions. According to IFJ, this survey "is going to fight for equal pay and opportunities." To support its campaign, IFJ calls on members to share stories of equal pay wins on social media using the campaign hashtag.

Gender Sensitive Indicators for Media



The Gender Sensitive Indicators for Media (GSIM) project, hosted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) aims to contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment in and through media of all forms, irrespective of the technology.

As noted by UNESCO, "the GSIM is a non-prescriptive set of indicators, designed particularly for media organisations. The purpose is to encourage media organisations to make gender equality issues transparent and comprehensible to the public, as well as to analyse their own internal policies and practices with a view to take necessary actions for change."[10]

In 2016, UNESCO trained representatives from 25 French-speaking African national broadcasters on how to apply the GSIM. Through this initiative, UNESCO seeks to strengthen media pluralism and the adoption of gender-sensitive policies in African broadcasting organisations.[11]

Gender and media research in Southern Africa

Gender and media activists in Southern Africa have undertaken some of the most extensive and consistent research on gender equality in and through the media. This research has taken a 360-degree approach to assessing regional media, including looking at media education, content, composition, audiences, regulators and media development organisations. Gender Links (GL) has coordinated this research, together with like-minded organisations, journalism and media studies departments across the region.

[9] International Federation of Journalists, (2021). Time to end the gender pay gap in journalism https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/women-workers/article/time-to-end-the-gender-pay-gap-in-journalism-says-ifj.html, accessed 24 June 2021
[10] Grizzle, A. (eds). 2012. Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media. UNESCO. Paris. Available at https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000217831, accessed 16 July 2021.
[11] UNESCO, (2016). Training Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media. Available at https://en.unesco.org/training-gender-sensitive-indicators-media , accessed 16 July 2021.

Table 9.4: Gender and media research in the region

YEAR	STUDY	WHAT IT COVERED
2003	Gender and Media Baseline	First regional study to monitor news items on gender in the editorial content of Southern African media. It monitored more than 25 000 news items.
2009	Glass Ceilings in Southern African Media Houses	Survey of women and men in a representative sample of media houses - newsrooms, marketing, management, and administration.
2010	Gender and Media Progress Study (GMPS)	Monitoring of news items from a representative sample of media outlets over a period of one month. This study followed on from the original 2003 *Gender and Media Baseline* study.
2010	Gender in Media Education (GIME) study	Staff and student composition, content and practise of media education and training.
2015	Gender and Media Progress Study (GMPS)	A follow-up to the 2010 GMPS research, covering 14 SADC countries.
2018	Glass Ceilings: Women in South African Media Houses	A follow-up to the 2009 regional research specifically focused on South African media houses.
2020	Gender and Media Progress Study (GMPS)	A follow-up to the 2015 GMPS research, covering 14 SADC countries.

Source: Gender Links.

Table 9.4 shows key gender and media research conducted in Southern Africa over the past two decades, culminating in the 2020 Gender and Media Progress Study (GMPS). Covering 18 630 news items, researchers for the 2020 GMPS study monitored news content in 14 SADC countries over one month.

The 2020 GMPS represents the latest study in two decades of regional research on gender and media in SADC

Gender and freedom of expression

3 May 2021 marked the 30th anniversary of the Windhoek Declaration, a statement of press freedom principles by African newspaper journalists produced by UNESCO in 1991. The sector celebrated 30 years under the theme "Information as a Public Good," underlining the indisputable importance of verified and reliable information. The theme also called attention to the essential role of free and professional journalists in producing and disseminating information, as well as tackling misinformation and other harmful content.

In the 30 years since the creation of the Windhoek Declaration, some parts of the region made great strides in expanding freedom of expression; yet little has changed in the specific promotion of women's freedom of expression and opinion.

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 enshrines the right to communicate and states that "everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information, communicate and express themselves in the media." This framing sidesteps several of the challenges specifically faced by women, such as in attaining certain roles in the media, reporting as journalists on certain topics, or expressing themselves, which is one of the reasons subsequent international documents and regional instruments have specifically addressed these topics in relation to freedom of expression and opinion.

This includes instruments such as the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa, initially adopted in 2002 and upgraded in 2019. It states, "Freedom of expression and access to information are fundamental rights." It recognises the receiving and accessing of information as well as the dissemination of information as a core right for media and citizens. Following its passage, freedom of expression and access to information laws in African countries now must align with the updated Declaration adopted in Banjul, Gambia, in November 2019.



Journalists took to the streets of Anosy, Madagascar, in 2014 following a government crackdown on media freedoms. Photo: Zotonantenaina Razanadratefa

Press freedom and gender equality intertwine: one cannot exist without the other. The idea of gender equality and equality of all voices exists implicitly in the notion of a pluralistic press, which should reflect the widest possible range of opinions. As a 2018 Canadian report on technology and women's empowerment noted, "Any discussion of freedom of expression must ask, whose freedom, defined by whom? It should not be defined, as it typically has, as men's right to squander the profits of communication companies to secure their own economic and political power or continue to omit and stereotype women in the content of their news and programming."[12]

All SADC countries guarantee the right to freedom of expression. They all also have media laws and policies that govern the operations and behaviours of the media. Some countries, however, have embraced stringent media laws that purport to uphold the status quo and which, in many instances, pose a threat to media freedom and democracy. In many ways, media freedom has continued to decline in the region.

The 2021 *World Press Freedom Index* conducted by Researchers without Borders (RFC) reveals that no SADC country ranks among the global top 20. Namibia continues to be the country with the strongest press freedom environment in the region, ranking 24th in the 2021 index, down from 23rd position in 2020. South Africa now sits in 32nd position (also down one spot from last year) and Botswana moved up one spot in 2021 to 38th position out of 180 countries. Zimbabwe (130), Eswatini (141), and DRC (149) sit among the worst global performers.[13]

> Gender equality and freedom of expression intertwine: you cannot have one without the other

[12] Byerly, C. 2018. Technology and women's empowerment in Media and Gender a holistic Agenda, WACC. Canada. Available at https://gamag.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/MD-2018-1.pdf, accessed 16 July 2021.
[13] Reporters Without Borders, (2020). Available at https://rsf.org/en/ranking, accessed 14 June 2021

SADC: No freedom of expression without gender equality[14]

On 3 May 2021, as the region continued to struggle with a relentless pandemic, it also commemorated World Press Freedom Day (WPFD) under the theme "Information as a Public Good." The theme called attention to the essential role of free and professional journalists in producing and disseminating information, by tackling misinformation and other harmful content.

In 2021, the commemorations took place amidst increasing evidence of online violence against women and in particular against women journalists. Women's participation in the media is clearly under threat, often leading to self-censorship.

Thirty years since the passing of the Windhoek Declaration (1991), with its aim to promote an independent and pluralistic press, the media still struggles to achieve this goal.

Although many largely describe free media as a mirror in which the public can see itself, in reality this has never been fully reflected. Women remain underrepresented, misrepresented and often treated unfairly in the media. Despite years of activism, education and advocacy aimed at guaranteeing the safety of female journalists, ensuring citizens hear all voices, creating equal opportunities and practicing equal treatment, SADC media still falls short.



Namibia Media Trust Director Zoe Titus speaks at a World Press Freedom Day event in Windhoek in 2021. Photo coutesy of The Namibian

Women news sources have increased by a mere percentage point in Southern Africa since 2015, according to the 2020 Gender and Media Progress Study. Women sources rose from 17% in 2003 to 19% in 2010 to 20% in 2015 and now sit at just 21%.

However, research found that almost half of SADC countries score higher than the regional average. Seychelles maintained its position as one of the better performing countries at 30% on this indicator: the only country that has reached 30% women sources. DRC, Tanzania and Zambia have the lowest number of women's voices in their news content. Yet while DRC remains amongst the worst performers in terms of reflecting women's voices and views, it has logged an increase of 11 percentage points since the 2015 study.

The fact that women's voices make up only one fifth of the views and voices that citizens read, hear and see in the news media is clear evidence that SADC media reflects only a fraction of the region's reality. Gender censorship remains a glaring reality in this absence of diverse voices. Underrepresentation of women's voices systematically silences and sidelines women from conversations about issues that concern them.

The GMPS has once again shone a spotlight on media practice, professionalism and ethics. The media's failure to amplify women's voices acts against the principle of just and inclusive societies.

Gender equality inextricably links with freedom of expression, participation and human rights and it is thus essential that the media give voice to all in society. The Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa (2002) pronounces access to information and freedom of expression as a fundamental and alienable human right. That makes women's access to expression a fundamental right.

Source: Tarisai Nyamweda Gender Links News Service

[14] Nyamweda, T. 2021. Celebrating World Press Freedom Day. Available at https://genderlinks.org.za/news/international-celebrating-word-press-freedom-day/, accessed 14 June 2021

Gaps also persist in the low representation of women working in the media sector, especially at decision-making levels, even though women in most SADC countries consist of 52% of the population. The 2018 study, Glass Ceilings: Women in South African Media Houses, for example, shows that while the country has seen an increase in the proportion of women in management positions it has not neared parity. Women journalists continue to experience unfair practices in their newsrooms, including assignment to certain types of stories or news beats based on their sex. This paralyses their ability to break through the media sector's glass ceiling.

Table 9.5: State of media freedom in SADC

Country	Media provisions
Angola	The constitution protects freedom of speech and of the press; however Angola continues to have a restrictive media environment. Press status for the country is "not free." The only outlets with a truly national reach and most widely accessed - Jornal de Angola, television channel Televisão Publica de Angola (TPA) and Radio National de Angola (RNA) - remain under government's firm grip. Private media is operational; however, it is very limited. In 2020, the state took effective control of several leading media outlets that already had public funding.[15]
Botswana	The Botswana Constitution enshrines freedom of expression in Chapter 12. On the surface, the country has a free and diverse media environment. However, a raft of clauses negate the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression in many laws, including the Cinematography Act, the Public Service Act, the Media Practitioners Act, the National Security Act, the Cybercrime and Computer Related Crimes Act of 2007, and the Corruption and Economic Crime Act of 1994. Additionally, sections 50 and 51 of the Penal Code on seditious offences, sections 90 to 92 of the Penal Code contain provisions on insult laws, and sections 192 to 199 of the Penal Code provide for criminal defamation.[16]
Comoros	The Comoros Constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press. However, Reporters Without Borders notes that many journalists self-censor. The government arbitrarily detained several journalists in 2020, prompting the National Union of Comorian Journalists to protest that "being held overnight" had become routine for media personnel.[17]
DRC	DRC laws and the constitution provide for freedom of speech, information, and the press, but, in practice, these rights remain limited. The government and non-state actors (such as armed groups) often use other regulations and methods to restrict freedom of speech and suppress criticism. The political allegiance found in the stories out of most media outlets in DRC normally reflects that of the owner.
Eswatini	The country has approximately 32 restrictive laws, including the Swaziland Television Authority Act 1983; Proscribed Publications Act 1968; Obscene Publications Act 1927; and Books and Newspaper Act 1963, which regulates the registration of newspapers. The Official Secrets Act 1968, Cinematograph Act 1920, and the Sedition and Subversive Activities Act 1938 provide for the suppression of sedition and seditious publications and criminalise criticising the king or any member of the royal family. The Computer Crime and Cybercrime Bill of 2020, if passed into law, will further criminalise publication of "fake news" that damages the country's image, with liability of a fine of up to ten million SZL (about US$620 000) or ten years in prison.[18]
Lesotho	While the Lesotho Constitution does not directly mention press freedom, it guarantees freedom of expression and information exchange. However, multiple laws, including the Sedition Proclamation No. 44 of 1938 and the Internal Security (General) Act of 1984 prohibit criticism of the government, give penalties for seditious libel, and endanger reporters' ability to protect the confidentiality of their sources.[19] Section 14 of the Constitution of Lesotho (1993) states that the right to freedom of expression and opinion is guaranteed including freedom to hold opinions without interference and freedom to communicate ideas and information without intrusion. In 2021, Lesotho promulgated new communications regulations that may affect privacy rights and freedom of expression online.
Madagascar	Madagascar enjoys a diverse and pluralised media landscape, which radio has, in recent times, dominated. Madagascar has a liberal policy towards the media and it has fostered the development of media pluralism and diversity.

[15] Reporters Without Borders, (2021). Press freedom still fragile despite the old dictator's departure. Available at https://rsf.org/en/angola, accessed 16 July 2021.
[16] Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, (2018). African Media Barometer Botswana. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. Windhoek. Available at http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/africa-media/15529.pdf, accessed 16 July 2021
[17] Reporters Without Borders, (2021). Alarming setbacks for press freedom. Available at https://rsf.org/en/comoros, accessed 16 July 2021
[18] Media Institute of Southern Africa, (2021). Southern Africa Press Freedom report. Media Institute of Southern Africa. Harare. https://data.misa.org/api/files/1619950689792O1gkm18usemy.pdf
[19] Media Monitoring Africa, (2015). Lesotho Elections 2015 Media Monitoring Interim Results. Media Monitoring Africa. Johannesburg. Available at http://www.mediamonitoringafrica.org/images/uploads/Lesotho_Interim_Report_PrintVersion_2.pdf, accessed 16 July 2021

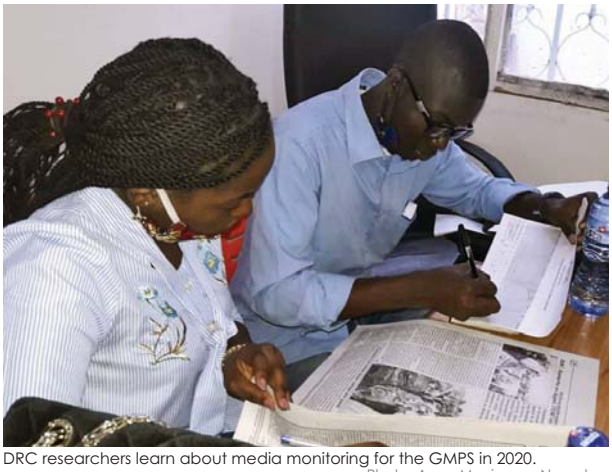
Country	Media provisions
Malawi	Section 36 of the Malawi Constitution states that the press shall have the right to report and publish freely, within Malawi and abroad, and to be accorded the fullest possible facilities for access to public information. Additionally, Section 35 states that everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression. Radio continues to be the most popular medium of accessing information as it has the widest reach and is available in many languages.[20]
Mauritius	Section 12 of the Constitution of Mauritius has always guaranteed freedom of expression. Within the same section, limitations are possible in the "interests of defence, public safety, public order, public morality or public health." Although Mauritius has not signed the SADC Gender Protocol, its constitution guarantees gender equality across all sectors.
Mozambique	Article 48 of the Mozambique constitution explicitly guarantees both freedom of expression and freedom of the press. More specifically, the Press Law guarantees, protects and promotes freedom of the press. However, several aspects of it contribute to limiting the full exercise of these freedoms, such as anti-democratic laws on state secrecy, laws that elevate crimes of defamation, slander and insult to certain figures (including general secretaries of political parties sitting in the Assembly of the Republic) to the category of an attack on state secrecy and the absence of incentives for the circulation of newspapers (including paid carriage).[21] Reporters Without Borders notes a "worrying decline in press freedom" following Filipe Nyusi's re-election as president in 2019.[22]
Namibia	The constitutional guarantee contained in Article 21.1 (a) of the Namibian Constitution gives all Namibians the right to freedom of expression, including freedom of the press and other media.
Seychelles	Seychelles has very few media outlets. The main outlet is the Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation. The creation of the Seychelles Media Commission sought to provide a platform for adjudication on media issues while ensuring more freedom, and the reduction of television and radio licence fees.
South Africa	Article 16 of the constitution protects the right to freedom of expression and the media, with reasonable and justifiable limitations in an open and democratic society. Section 32(1) guarantees freedom to access information, stating that everyone has a right of access to any information held by the state and information held by private persons that is required for the exercise or protection of any right.[23]
Tanzania	Tanzania has a vibrant media industry with strong regulatory systems. The new draft constitution makes provisions for media freedom and free media access to all its citizens. Tanzania has many private media houses as well as a strong community media sector. However, human rights groups, media platforms and independent publishers took the government to court in 2018 over the new Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) Regulations, which set out a series of prohibited content affecting bloggers, online radio stations, online streaming platforms, online forums, social media users and internet cafes.[24]
Zambia	Article 20 of the Zambian Constitution protects freedom of expression. Regarding media protection in the constitution, Article 20 (2) states, "subject to the provisions of this constitution no law shall make any provision that derogates from freedom of the press." Political issues continue to dominate the mainstream media, and diversity of content in the print media remains limited. Zambia has made great strides around self-regulation, which has narrowed the divide between state and privately owned media as they united in the establishment of the self-regulatory body, the Zambia Media Council (ZAMEC). However, citizens often cannot express themselves freely due to the perceived elevated levels of political intolerance.[25]
Zimbabwe	In the constitution, Chapter 4 (article 61.1) notes that every person has the right to freedom of artistic expression; and article 61.2 notes that "every person is entitled to freedom of the media." However, "a crisis of the constitution versus constitutionalism" exists in Zimbabwe. Even though legislation on freedom of expression and of the media exists, there is a lack of substance and implementation of the constitutional provisions. An example is the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), which is currently undergoing a process of "unbundling," whereby lawmakers envision access to information, media regulation and privacy issues as separate pieces of legislation rather than a single act. However, the Act still stands in law and has not been changed.[26]

Source: Africa Media Barometer Country reports, Reporters Without Borders, MISA.

[20] Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, (2012) .African Media Barometer Malawi. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. Windhoek. Available at http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/africa-media/09541.pdf
[21] Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, (2018). African Media Barometer Mozambique. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. Windhoek. Available at http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/africa-media/16084.pd, accessed 16 July 2021.
[22] Reporters Without Borders, News Blackout in the North (2019). Available at https://rsf.org/en/mozambique, accessed on 16 July 2021.
[23] Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, (2018). African Media Barometer South Africa. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. Windhoek. Available at http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/africa-media/15527.pdf, accessed 16 July 2021.
[24] Giles, C. "Tanzania's bloggers fight back against $930 fee as court grants injunction." CNN, 7 May 2018. Available at https://edition.cnn.com/2018/04/12/africa/tanzania-blogging-internet-freedoms-africa/index.html, accessed 16 July 2021.
[25] Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, (2013). African Media Barometer Zambia. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. Windhoek. Available at http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/africa-media/10575.pdf, accessed on 16 July 2021.
[26] Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, (2020). African Media Barometer Zimbabwe. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. Windhoek. Available at http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/africa-media/17189.pdf, accessed on 16 July 2021.

Women and men in media practise

SADC Protocol Article 29.4: State parties shall take measures to promote the equal representation of women and men in the ownership and decision-making structures of the media.



DRC researchers learn about media monitoring for the GMPS in 2020.
Photo: Anna Mayimona Ngemba

Achieving gender equality in the media industry has been a long and contentious battle that feminist media activists continue to fight globally.

Diversity in media workforce composition remains a critical issue in the sector. Having a diverse media workforce will pave the way for an industry that reflects the communities it represents. A diverse work force also helps shift what the media prioritises as it incorporates different perspectives into news coverage on diverse issues.[28] Women in media continue to face a myriad of challenges in media practise, including sexism, sexual harassment, gender pay gaps, gendered division of labour and more recently new threats and impediments linked to online harassment and "cyber misogyny" have emerged via social media.[27]

Recent research on media composition reveals that more women have been securing jobs in the media sector. However, understanding the scope of the issue involves more than analysing mere numbers. Vertical segregation in the news media remains - a problem that leaves women largely absent from key editorial decision-making roles. Horizontal segregation, which results in gendered divisions of tasks associated with reporting, also remains an ongoing challenge.[29]

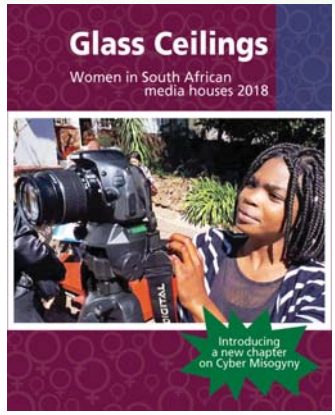
Media decision makers, both men and women, need to adequately and meaningfully assess what women do in the media, what roles they play, what kinds of stories they tell, and how much they earn - all with an eye to improving representation and diversifying reporting and revenues. Reports show that almost equal numbers of women and men work in newsrooms yet women continue to hit a glass ceiling in most media houses. In South Africa, for example, a recent Glass Ceiling study found that systemic sexism and misogyny continues in the media, ensuring newsrooms remain hostile environments for women.[30]

[27] Lowe Morna et al. 2018. (eds) Southern African Gender Protocol Barometer. Gender Links. Johannesburg
[28] Daniels, G and Nyamweda, T. 2018. Glass Ceilings: Women in South Africa media Houses. Gender Links. Johannesburg
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.



South African media still hobbled by misogyny

In 2018, Gender Links and the South Africa National Editors Forum (SANEF), with support from the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) conducted a new study, *Glass Ceilings: Women in South African Media Houses*, a follow-up to the 2009 Glass Ceilings studies with a focus on South African media.



Some of its most glaring findings do not relate to numbers of women in newsrooms, as women and men seem to have reached parity, although men still dominate in most senior positions. The research found that struggles for women have become more about the sexism that persists even as their numbers increase.

Meanwhile, while race and gender dynamics in South African media have changed dramatically, black women remain grossly underrepresented in key decision-making positions and the pay gap is widening, especially in the age of digitisation. The old boys' network is alive and well. In the #MeToo and #TotalShutDown era, the conversation has shifted beyond numbers to the underlying patriarchal norms that continue to fuel sexist attitudes, harassment and its newest ugly form - cyber misogyny.

The research also notes that women still hit a glass ceiling at senior, top management and board levels, when female representation wanes. Women represented only 36% of top managers, 46% of senior managers and 19% of those on boards of directors in media houses in South Africa.

Although the research shows gender parity as a reality in the overall composition of South African media houses, all these underlying factors highlight persistent gender inequalities. However, a new cohort of young media women has been asserting their rights and the Glass Ceilings 2018 study reflects both a feminist backlash and an increased anger and assertiveness by women in the media against sexism. This may be the result of the general zeitgeist of the times, both globally and nationally.

Source: Glass Ceilings Women in South African media houses 2018, South African National Editors Forum (SANEF) and Gender Links



The African Media Barometer, a media perception index by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) notes that more women in **Madagascar** have been choosing to pursue careers in journalism. It found that an increasing number of women work in editorial offices, as both editorial managers and journalists. However, the country's media still does not adequately represent women as media sources, except in stories stereotypically viewed as "women's stories" (such as society, fashion, cooking and gender).[31]



In the case of **Zimbabwe**, the fact that fewer women work in newsrooms in general, and in senior positions specifically, attests to the underlying challenges in a society that still marginalises and restricts women to certain workspaces and positions. The gender-insensitive media environment forces out or deters women

[31] Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, (2019). African Media Barometer Madagascar. FES Media. Windhoek. Available at http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/africa-media/16282.pdf, accessed 16 July 2021.

from entering newsrooms. Lack of gender policies in media houses also often results in employers automatically hiring men over women. Cultural impediments that restrict women from travelling away from home and working in the evenings also serve as barriers for female journalists.[32]



Despite its more conducive environment for press freedom in **Namibia**, women remain under-represented in senior management at media houses. Research has also found that women make less money than their male colleagues do. Anecdotal evidence of entrenched misogyny leading to toxic cultures in some newsrooms compounds this. Women journalists are also prone to attacks, as illustrated by the example of two female journalists, Charmaine Ngatjiheue and Jemima Beukes, who said the president's security detail "manhandled" them while they tried to report on the opening of a new facility at a Windhoek hospital.[33] The 2020 Global Gender Gap Report reinforces these realities, stating, "There is still a 31.4% average gender gap that remains to be closed globally."[34]



In **South Africa**, the *Glass Ceilings* study noted that sexual harassment is a daily reality for women in the media, yet leaders in the industry do not prioritise it. In 2018, 87% of media houses surveyed said they had sexual harassment policies, compared to 82% found in a 2009 study of the same title. Yet countless first-hand accounts in the report attested to sexist attitudes, practices and harassment at work and in the field.

Limited research exists globally on institutional practices, careers and promotion within media industries. The 2009 International Women's Federation report remains the only global study carried out to ascertain these issues. Furthermore, the 2017 Barometer noted, "there is presently limited data on ownership of media by women and men in the region - the welcome new parameter introduced in the Post-2015 SADC Gender Protocol. However, the governance structures of media houses in Southern Africa remain firmly in the hands of men (70%), with women constituting only 30% of those on boards of directors."[35] Various factors influence this lack of equal representation. Media houses often struggle with a gendered division of labour, which dictates news practices. Women often cover soft news beats compared to the hard news beats covered by men.

Sexual harassment is a daily reality for women in the media



In **Botswana**, MISA notes that gender representation in newsrooms has barely improved in the past decade. The work environment is generally not conducive for women and made worse by low salaries and misconceptions that label women as "lazy" and unable to take on certain tasks. This has relegated female journalists to entertainment reporting, while their male colleagues cover politics and investigative segments.[36] This affects what journalists report and whose opinions they consult. It also affects the portrayal of women in the media.

[32] Mpofu, S. "Zimbabwe media work space still a male domain," Zimfact 16 September 2019. Available at https://zimfact.org/analysis-zimbabwe-media-work-space-still-a-male-domain/, accessed on 16 July 2021.
[33] Guchu, W. "Assaulted journalists dismiss state house apology", Eagle FM, 3 June 2020, Available at https://www.eaglefm.com.na/news/assaulted-journalists-dismiss-state-house-apology/, accessed on 16 July 2021.
[34] Media Institute of Southern Africa, (2021). Southern Africa press freedom report 2019-2020. Media Institute of Southern Africa. Harare. Available at https://data.misa.org/api/files/1619950689792O1gkm18usemy.pdf, accessed 18 June 2021
[35] Lowe Morna, C et al (Eds).2019 Southern Africa Gender Protocol 2017 Barometer, Gender Links, Johannesburg.
[36] Media Institute of Southern Africa, (2021). Southern Africa press freedom report 2019-2020. Media Institute of Southern Africa. Harare Available at https://data.misa.org/api/files/1619950689792O1gkm18usemy.pdf, accessed 18 June 2021.

Figure 9.1: Women reporters over time - regional

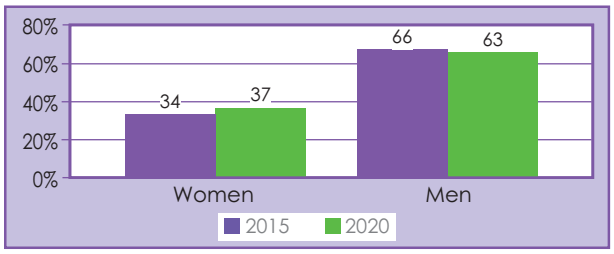
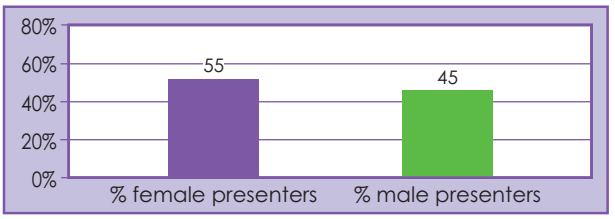


Figure 9.2: Who presents in the media in SADC

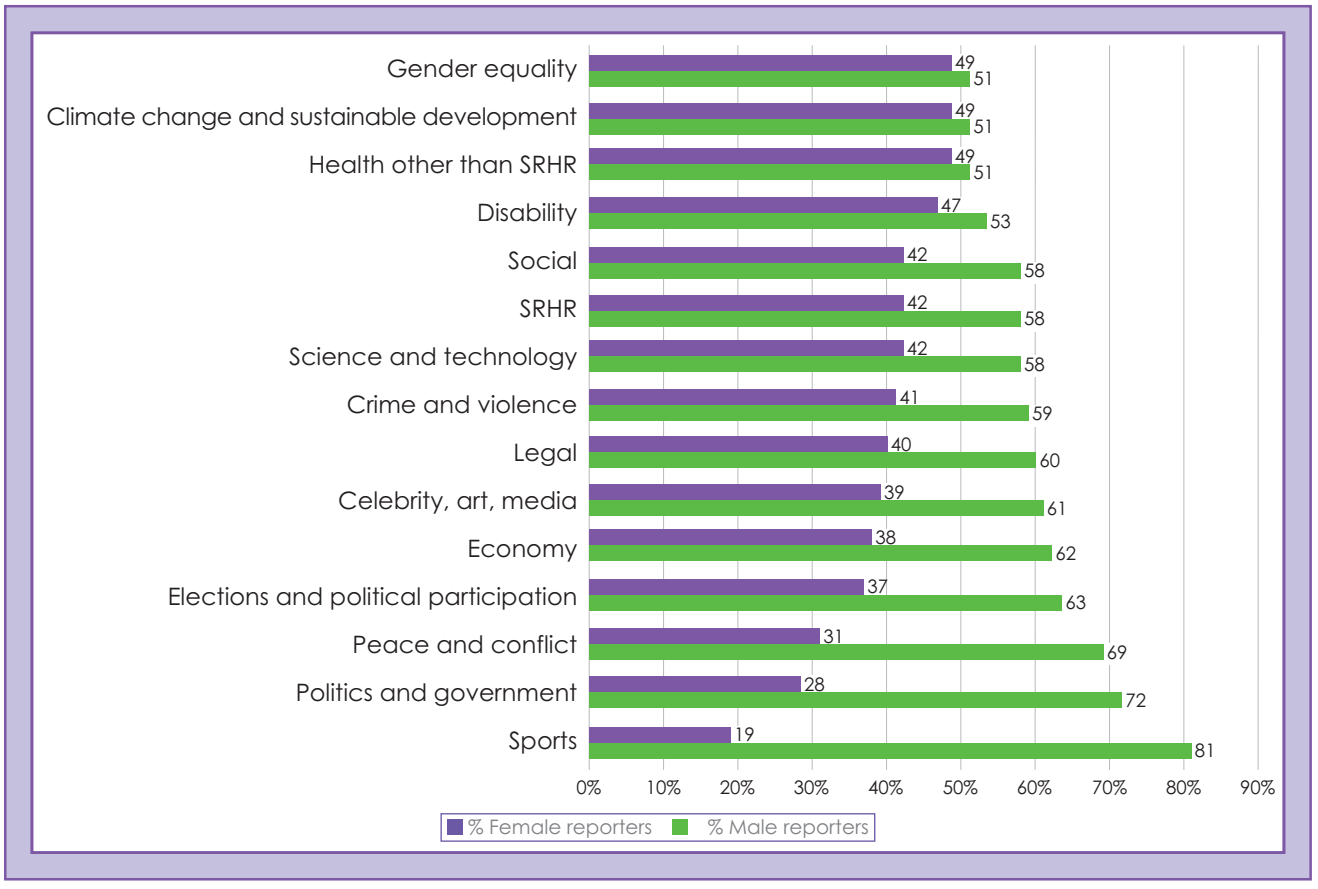


Source: Gender and Media Progress Study 2020.

Figure 9.1 illustrates that the GMPS found that newsrooms continue to employ more men as reporters. The number of women reporters in the region increased by just three percentage points between 2015 and 2020. At this rate of progress, SADC newsrooms will take more than two decades to reach parity.

Figure 9.2 illustrates that more women present the news media in the region, on screens and radio airwaves, making up 55% of news hosts compared to men at 45%. This is one area where women have dominated over the years. Although beat journalism has declined in recent years as newsrooms cut budgets and ask generalist reporters to do more with less time and focus, a tendency for journalists to gravitate to certain topics remains.

Figure 9.3: Who reports on what



Source: Gender and Media Progress Study 2020.

The 2020 GMPS also ascertained which topics women and men reporters[37] cover across the region. Figure 9.3 shows that women and men cover different topics. Across all thematic areas, women journalists remain underrepresented, with the biggest difference on issues such as sports, political, and economic reporting. However, women get closest to parity on topics that media decision-makers have often viewed as "women's issues," such as in gender equality, health and social issues - once again underlining the sexist attitudes that pervade SADC media houses.



In **Malawi**, sexual abuse and harassment in the newsroom is a growing concern, with some female reporters saying male colleagues forced them into relationships or threatened their jobs. MISA Malawi, together with the Association of Women in Media and Women Lawyers Association, teamed up to support and empower female journalists to tackle the issue. Their initiative involves commencing both criminal and civil proceedings against perpetrators as one way of improving the working environment for women.[38]



A female journalist interviewed by MISA for its Southern Africa press freedom report 2019-2020 stated that in **Lesotho**, "Women find themselves easily sexually harassed, including by sources, because their employers inadequately remunerate them." Women noted that sources often promise information on stories at "private meetings."[39] Because of pressure to deliver in the male-dominated industry, they end up in places where men can easily harass them. Majirata Latela, a female journalist working with The Reporter, stated that a source once asked her what she would "give in exchange for the information." Others argue that some female journalists succumb to sexual advances to "retain information channels," while some simply want to put food on their table, given the poor pay of media workers.[40]



Lucia Mabetha, the Gender Links Lesotho country manager speaks to members of the media in 2018 in Maseru. Photo: Ntolo Lekau

COVID-19 and journalism

Despite the many challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, journalists continue to report from its frontlines. This means media workers in SADC face new and dangerous occupational risks while reporting on the crisis. At the same time, the economic impact of COVID-19 poses an existential threat to journalism, freedom of expression, and to the individual rights of journalists. It has already had a significant impact on media institutions and news reporting practices.



In Botswana, journalists worry that the pandemic has provided an opportunity for the government of Mokgweetsi Masisi to roll back press freedoms. Journalists now risk prison sentences of up to five years if they publish any information about COVID-19 that has not come from the director of public health services or the World Health Organisation (WHO), according to Reporters Without Borders.[41] In May 2021, the Committee to Protect Journalists reported that police had

[37] This included reporters from all media types monitored: print, online radio and TV reporters in the field.
[38] Media Institute of Southern Africa, (2021). Southern Africa press freedom report 2019-2020. Media Institute of Southern Africa. Harare. Available at https://data.misa.org/api/files/1619950689792O1gkm18usemy.pdf, accessed 18 June 2021
[39] Ibid
[40] Ibid
[41] Reporters Without Borders, (2020). The 2020 pandemic has challenged press freedom in Africa. Available at https://rsf.org/en/botswana, accessed 7 July 2021.

arrested Oratile Dikologang, co-founder of *Botswana People's Daily News*, and charged him over social media posts about COVID-19, according to local media reports.[42] Losses in advertising revenue resulting from the pandemic have also fuelled self-censorship by media as they struggle to retain advertisers.

Research in Southern Africa illustrates the different impact of COVID-19 on women and men within the journalism fraternity. Indeed, COVID-19 has exacerbated existing disparities. Decision-making about how to operate or allocate resources during the pandemic often excluded input from women, since men continue to occupy most leadership roles in institutional structures.[43] Furthermore, many women lost their jobs during the pandemic because of the less prominent roles they occupy. Women journalists also reported vulnerability to retrenchments and salary cuts as well as other measures to cut costs.[44]



Zimbabwe: "Failing is not an option" - COVID-19's impact on women journalists[45]

Due to COVID-19, challenges have arisen with safety concerns, coping mechanisms of journalists in general, and female journalists in particular topping the list. Unlike their male counterparts, female journalists carry a double burden. As COVID-19 snakes its way around the world, it has started exacerbating gender inequalities, hence the need to listen to experiences of female journalists.

"My first thoughts were that we are going to drop like flies considering our collapsed health system. I thought that if the US and Britain were struggling to contain the disease, what about poor Zimbabwe," said Faith Zaba, the editor of the weekly Zimbabwe Independent. "I was even more worried after broadcaster Zororo Makamba died; it was the conditions under which he died that put me in panic mode. All of a sudden you start thinking about what would happen to your kids if you die from COVID-19."

In Zimbabwe COVID-19 announced its arrival with the death of Makamba, a celebrated broadcaster, perhaps a strong message that journalists, too, are at high risk. Covering pandemics and other health crises are one of many ways that journalists put their own safety on the line. Just like soldiers in war, journalists also risk their lives to gather information to empower people and ensure communities are safe.



"You start thinking about what would happen to your kids if you die from COVID-19," said Faith Zaba, editor of the *Zimbabwe Independent*, in June 2020 while speaking about the worries journalists have faced while reporting on the COVID-19 pandemic.

Photo courtesy of Zimbabwe Situation

The COVID-19 situation is even worse for female journalists, who already faced numerous gender barriers in their line of duty before the pandemic. "I no longer have time to rest due to the pressure at work. The worst part is I do health reporting so all pressure is mounted on me and sometimes I have been forced to do stories that directly expose me to COVID-19," said Amanda Moyo-Ndlovu.

COVID-19 response strategies, including lockdown and physical distancing, while proving effective in the fight against the pandemic, have complicated the work of

[42] Committee to Protect Journalists, (2021). News editor in Botswana faces jail time over Facebook posts, alleges suffocation by police. Available at https://cpj.org/2021/05/news-editor-botswana-jail-facebook/, accessed 4 July 2021
[43] Media Institute of Southern Africa, (2021). Southern Africa press freedom report 2019-2020. Media Institute of Southern Africa. Harare. Available at https://data.misa.org/api/files/1619950689792O1gkm18usemy.pdf, accessed 18 June 2021
[44] Ibid
[45] Mpofu, T. COVID-19 experiences of female journalists, Gender Links News Service, 22 June 2020. Available at https://genderlinks.org.za/news/journalism-covid-19-experiences-of-female-journalists/, accessed 2 July 2021.

journalists in general and female journalists in particular.

"I have found myself working longer hours and more than I do when I am working from the office. When you work from the office at the end of the day, you leave your work at the office and go home. There is a balance between work and home life. But now there is no such separation," said Zaba.

Zaba, one of the few female editors in the country, said that convincing news sources, most of whom prefer anonymity, to agree to an interview over the phone, something that they are not comfortable with, is not a mean task.

"Just imagine trying to do an investigative piece over the phone and at a distance. It is not easy but we cannot afford to compromise our brand, we have to maintain the high quality," she added. "This means more work and pressure from editors who want their stories done and multi-sourced either way and that is so stressful. I have to work extra hard, longer hours and of course find time to breastfeed my baby although I sometimes knock off very late and start work early."

According to Zaba, who has been working from home, covering COVID-19 is even worse for female editors. "It is more difficult for the female journalists and worse still for a female editor. My day starts with sweeping the house. I then sit on the computer and start editing. In between, I have WhatsApp and Zoom meetings. I also have to deal with resource issues for the reporters and the rest of the team.

"I sometimes forget to eat breakfast. I have been having more of brunch (breakfast and lunch combined). In between, I have to cook for the kids and wash dishes. I have been struggling to separate work and home life. The kids have been suffering as I am unable to spend enough time with them," she said adding that there are days when her children have come to her bedroom at midnight and ordered her to switch off the computer and go to bed.

"There are days I have had to work until 2am. Sometimes I envy my male colleagues because unlike us, they can be totally focused on their work without other distractions. Sometimes I feel like I am working on batteries. "I push myself because I can't afford to fail. If I fail, I would have let down my female colleagues and closed the door on them. Failing is not an option for me."

In the middle of editing stories and managing the newsroom from a distance, Zaba like most female journalists, has to think about feeding the family.

"With everyone at home, it's more expensive to feed the family. On the technological side, data is now very expensive and so are voice calls," she said, adding that her social life is almost zero. With schools closed, Zaba, like many other mothers, has to ensure that children have access to the internet to participate in e-learning.



"Female journalists rose up to the occasion," said Ruth Butaumocho, managing editor of *The Herald*, speaking about the important role women played in reporting the pandemic throughout 2020.
Photo courtesy of The Herald

Despite all these challenges, *The Herald*'s managing editor, Ruth Butaumocho, said female journalists have measured up to the task right from the start of COVID-19 coverage. "They were there in time; they would even stay longer hours and even go home as early as 1am. Remember this was the time when press conferences would just mushroom from everywhere. I am happy to say that, of course there could have been other peripheral challenges, but female journalists rose up to the occasion."

"One major lesson is that I don't have to burn fuel every day to drive to the office; I can just be as effective working from home. You don't need physical meetings because virtual ones

are just as effective. We all have been stampeded into embracing the fourth revolution, which is a good thing," said Zaba as if to describe the new normal for journalists.

According to Butaumocho, COVID-19 has taught journalists to appreciate the importance of research, multi-sourcing and robust use of technology. "We now appreciate the importance of learning to use the ordinary technology. I remember in our newsroom at some point we had to urgently convene on Zoom and guess what, a lot of people didn't even know what Zoom is all about. But since that time people have learnt to experiment with a lot of technological initiatives."

Before COVID-19, several media monitoring studies, including the *Gender and Media Progress Study*, revealed that many media leaders treat health reporting as a less important news beat, often assigning it to female journalists. But coronavirus has turned health into the story of the century.

"COVID-19 has taught me that health is not a health matter, it is economic, political, social, scientific and biological. It has a bearing on countries, governments, people and social life notwithstanding the economic cost it comes with it," said Lulu Brenda Harris, a reporter with the Centre for Innovation and Technology (CITE) an online news platform.

Source: Thabani Mpofu, GL News Service

Vaccine justice for journalists

Some of the best journalism occurs at close proximity to the news as it unfolds. However, this type of work proved more difficult in the context of COVID-19, a highly infectious and deadly virus. Despite this, journalists across SADC put their lives, and the lives of their family members, at risk over the past year to report on the crisis and provide essential public health news to citizens across the region. Since the start of the pandemic, dozens of journalists across the SADC region - and around the world - have died after contracting COVID-19 in the line of duty.[46]

Thus, as vaccines begin rolling out across the region, media advocacy and support agencies have pushed SADC governments to consider journalists among the vaccine priority groups so they can remain safe while carrying out their important work. In June 2021, South Africa, the country hardest hit by COVID-19 in the Southern Africa region, announced that it would prioritise journalists in its vaccine roll out. This is in line with the country's aim to protect those working on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Prominent South African journalist Karima Brown is one of many Southern African journalists who lost their lives to COVID-19 in March 2021. Photo: Twitter

[46] Allsop, J. COVID is still killing journalists around the world. Columbia Journalism Review, 23 June 2021, Available at https://www.cjr.org/the_media_today/covid_journalists_south_africa.php, accessed 4 July 2021.

SANEF welcomes decision to prioritise journalists in vaccine roll out[47]

29 June 2021 - The South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF) welcomed the government's decision to follow through on its promise to prioritise journalists in the country's vaccine rollout programme. Journalists, as designated frontline workers, have risked their lives every day for the past 16 months, working throughout the pandemic as part of their responsibility to the public.

Even during the different peaks of the pandemic, they have not had the option to suspend work or work from home because of the nature of their work and the critical service they provide. They have traversed the country, going to hospitals, clinics, vaccination sites, mass rallies, press conferences etc. to reflect on the pandemic, in service to the country to ensure that the public is adequately informed.

In June 2021, the government of South Africa informed SANEF that journalists would be next in line as soon as all media houses submit their information regarding their employees' age groups and regions where they are stationed. All community media establishments around the country including freelance journalists will also receive forms that they must complete and submit to Government Communications and Information System (GCIS).

SANEF particularly appreciates the government's decision to not only inoculate frontline journalists but to accommodate all categories of media workers as the government wants to target and deal with the media as a sector than a selected group.

Details about the programme and what needs to be done to get the whole sector vaccinated will be forthcoming. We call on all journalists and the media fraternity to vaccinate so that the government can quickly move onto the next priority sectors.

SANEF made an impassioned plea to the National Coronavirus Command Council (NCCC) for journalists to be on the list of essential workers and be prioritised in the second phase of the rollout. We also lobbied President Cyril Ramaphosa, pleading the case for journalists to be considered for vaccination. SANEF was extremely concerned that without a plan to vaccinate journalists, they will continue to be infected by the disease. SANEF argued that, like other front-line workers, journalists posed a serious threat to their families and that this had an equally daunting impact on the state of their mental health.

SANEF observed that small newsrooms battle with the job's demands as their colleagues get infected in the line of duty and are forced to isolate. Despite the risk, they remained committed to the cause, going beyond the call of duty as the nation struggles through these unprecedented times.

Source: SANEF statement, 29 June 2021

[47] SANEF. SANEF welcomes the government's decision to prioritise journalists in the vaccine rollout plan, 29 June 2021. Available at https://sanef.org.za/sanef-welcomes-the-governments-decision-to-prioritise-journalists-in-the-vaccine-rollout-plan/, accessed 3 July 2021.

Women in media content

SADC Protocol Article 30.2: State parties shall encourage the media to give equal voice to women and men in all areas of coverage, including increasing the number of programmes for, by and about women on gender-specific topics that challenge gender stereotypes.

UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka has said the ways media depicts women has "a profound effect on societal attitudes and reinforce traditional gender roles. Women and girls are half of humanity. Giving equal time and weight to their stories, featuring them as positive models not victims, plays an under-appreciated part in creating a better, freer world for all of us."[48]

Unfortunately, news stories continue to portray women in a limited number of roles. Sexualised images of women remain rife, and media tends to define women in terms of their physical appearance, not abilities. When it is not portraying women as sex objects, the media most often shows women as victims of violence or homemakers.[49] Although stereotypes of women as caregivers (such as the selfless mother so popular in advertisements) have positive connotations, they nevertheless represent stereotypes, which usually do not reflect women's complex experiences and aspirations.


Maria Moureno, a councillor from Mozambique, being interviewed by a Televisão de Moçambique journalist in Maputo. Photo: Raul Manhisse

In addition to appearing in a limited number of roles, women are often simply missing from the media. Media remains much less likely to feature women in news stories and less likely to interview women for their opinions.[50] Certain news categories further silence women, especially rural women, elderly women, young women and women from certain religious and ethnic groups. This strips these women of their voice, agency and ability to participate in the development of their communities.

When the media does cover issues of concern to women, such as violence, SRHR, and women in decision-making, it often confines this coverage to special pages and segments, tagged as "women's issues," rather than leading news.

As the GMMP noted, "Mainstream media coverage continues to rely on men as experts in the fields of business, politics and economics. Women in the news are more likely to be featured in stories about accidents, natural disasters, or domestic violence than in stories about their professional abilities or expertise."[51] Although women desire to contribute to the national discourse and to their local public sphere, media often does not recognise or amplify their voices.

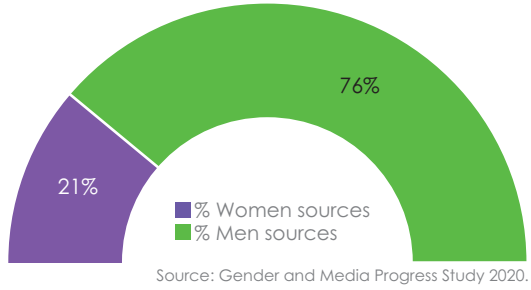
The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) advocate the imperative of "leaving no one

[48] World Association of Christian Communication, (2015).Who makes the news? The Global Media Monitoring Project report. World Association of Christian Communication. Toronto.
[49] Spears, G. Seydegart, K. and Gallagher, M. 2000. Who Makes the News? Global Media Monitoring Project 2000. World Association of Christian Communication. London. Available at http://www.erinresearch.com/documents/gmmp2000.pdf, accessed 16 July 2021.
[50] Ibid
[51] Ibid

behind," yet that is exactly what is happening when media silences women's voices, experiences and concerns. The under-representation and misrepresentation of women can also significantly skew the way women and girls view themselves.

The *Gender and Media Progress Study* gauges the extent of progress in achieving gender equality in and through media content. Since 2003, it has represented the largest and longest running longitudinal study and most extensive research on gender equality in the news media in Southern Africa. The GMPS 2020, conducted in 14 SADC countries,[52] is a follow up to the GMPS 2015 study. This data and information provides the region with insights into how the news media performs, including on progress made and the gaps that still need filling. The GMPS covers gender representation within news media content. Coinciding with the sixth GMMP study in 2020, the GMPS also enables Southern African countries to benchmark themselves against global findings as the two studies measure similar parameters. The GMPS borrows greatly from the GMMP but extends its period of monitoring to one month to ensure collection of a wider mix of stories. The section that follows presents some of the key issues for this research, particularly on SRHR.

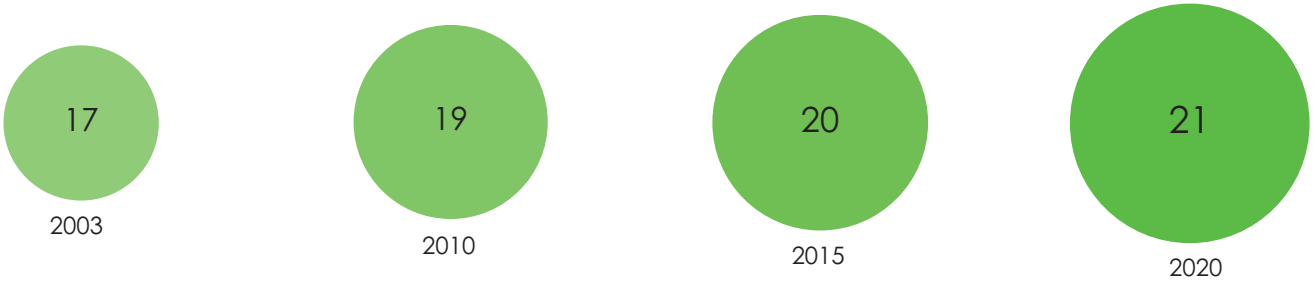
Figure 9.4: Women and men news sources in SADC media



Source: Gender and Media Progress Study 2020.

Figure 9.4 shows the continued and substantial bias towards men's perspectives in news coverage in the Southern African region. The GMPS 2020 reveals that across the region women make up 21% of the voices heard, read about, or seen in online, print, television and radio news[53] across the 14[54] SADC countries where researchers monitored news media.

Figure 9.5: Proportion of women sources over time

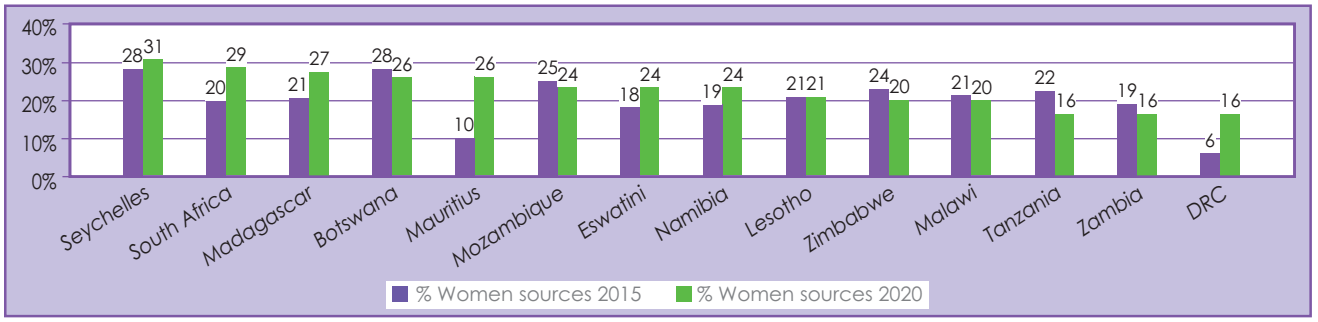


Source: Gender and Media Progress Study 2020.

Figure 9.5 illustrates the minimal increase in the proportion of women sources over the years of study, from 17% in the 2003 GMBS to 21% in the GMPS 2020. This shows that, over a period of close to 20 years, news coverage has improved by merely four percentage points when it comes to accessing women as sources. Men still overwhelmingly relay information to media consumers in the region.

[52] Angola did not collect a big enough sample for analysis and inclusion in the study.
[53] Some sources in the monitoring were neither identified as women nor men.
[54] Although Angola monitored in the GMPS 2020 the number was not an adequate number for analysis. The figures are not included here.

Figure 9.6: Women and men news sources by country

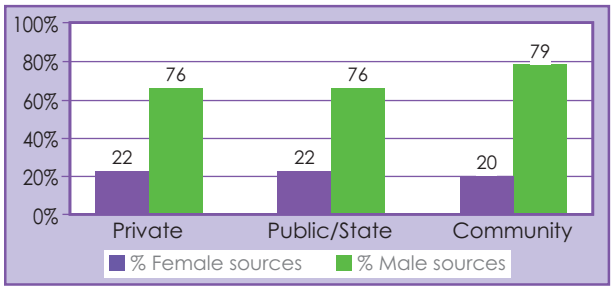


Source: Gender and Media Progress Study 2020.

Figure 9.6 shows individual performance across the 14 countries in which researchers monitored news media, comparing 2015 and 2020. Women's voices remain significantly less frequent in news media across all countries, ranging from a high of 31% in Seychelles to a low of just 16% in DRC, Tanzania and Zambia. Only Seychelles surpassed the 30% mark for women sources: a target that gender and media activists hoped to achieve by now when they launched the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development in 2008. Seychelles has consistently had the highest proportion of women news sources in the media over the longitudinal monitoring of the GMPS.

The data also shows a worrying decline in six SADC countries: Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Meanwhile, Lesotho has remained constant while other states have seen increases, with the biggest gain in Mauritius, from 10% in 2015 to 26% in 2020.

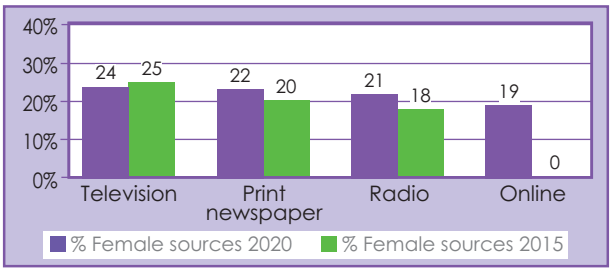
Figure 9.7: Women and men sources by ownership across SADC



Source: Gender and Media Progress Study 2020.

Public and private media lead the way by a small margin on women's representation, as illustrated in Figure 9.7, which disaggregates women sources according to types of media ownership. It shows that the GMPS 2020 study found that journalists working for public and private media access more women voices (22%), compared to 20% in community media. As the form of media closest to the people, community media should excel on this indicator, providing access to all segments, including the voices of community women. So far, it has yet to do so. These figures remain significantly lower than the target of 30% women sources. Public media has thus failed at its mandate to represent all constituent voices.

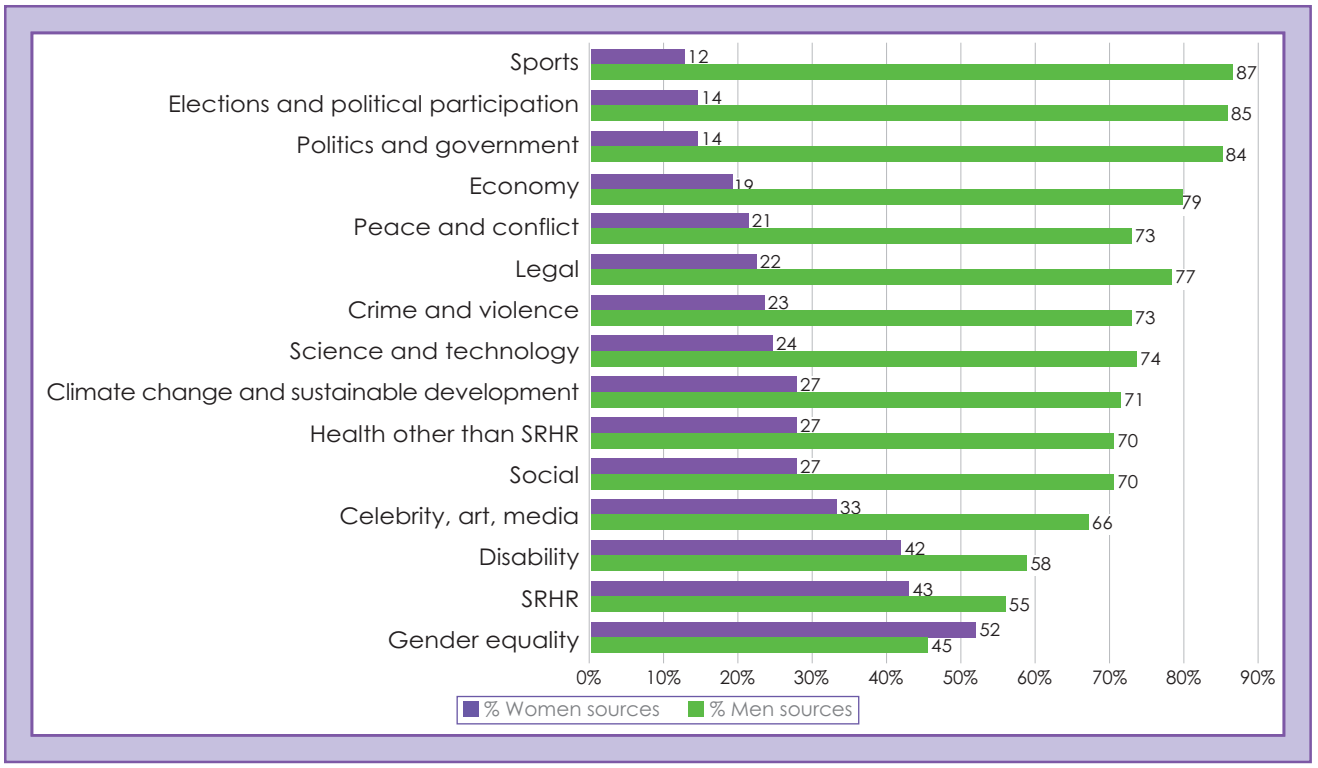
Figure 9.8: Women and men sources by medium over time in SADC



Source: Gender and Media Progress Study 2020.

The most recent GMPS found no material difference in the way that different news mediums access women sources compared to 2015. Figure 9.8 shows that television continues to be the medium where women's voices appear the most, however it receded by one percentage point from 25% to 24%. Print and radio experienced slight gains, with print media now at 22% and radio at 21%. For the first time, the GMPS monitored online news platforms that do not have an offline presence. The underrepresentation of women's voices in other mediums continues across online news platforms: women sources in online media comprise only 19% of those accessed - the lowest amongst the four groups.

Figure 9.9: Who speaks on different topics

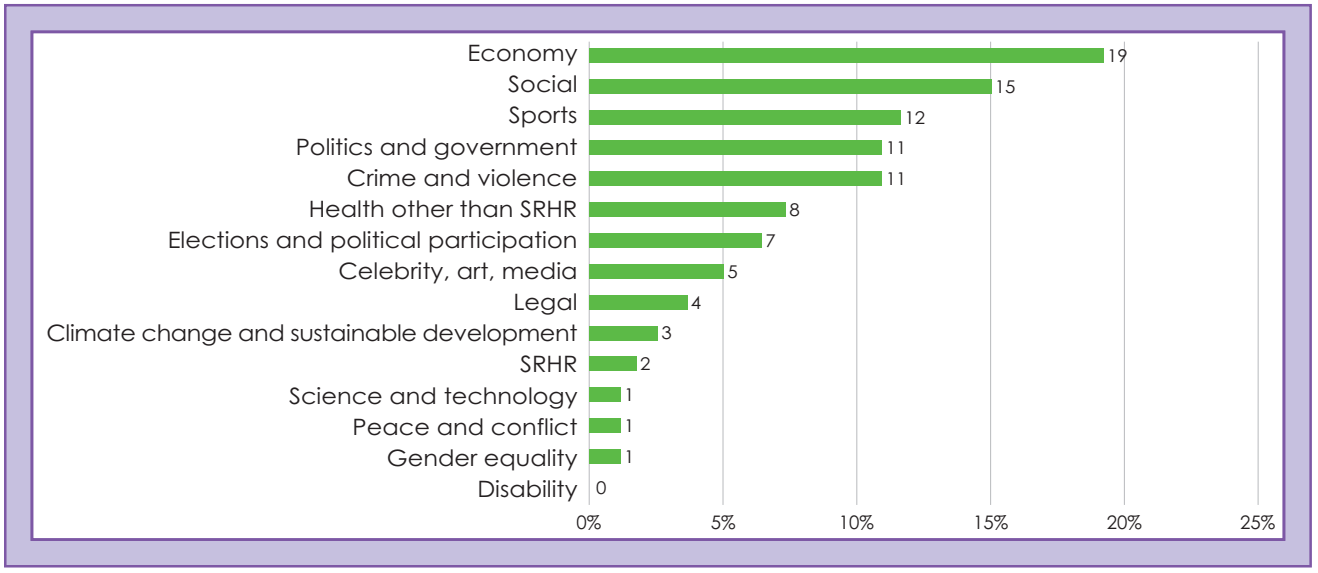


Source: Gender and Media Progress Study 2020.

Figure 9.9 shows that women speak most on stories about gender issues and least in stories about sports. Gender equality (53%) represents the only topic category in which women's voices dominate. Journalists access women's views and their voices seldom in news about politics and government (14%) and the economy (19%).

Journalists spoke to women more in stories about SRHR at 43% and disability at 42%. Given the significance of these issues for women, however, it is worrisome that SADC's media has yet to reach gender parity in its sourcing of voices for stories on these topics.

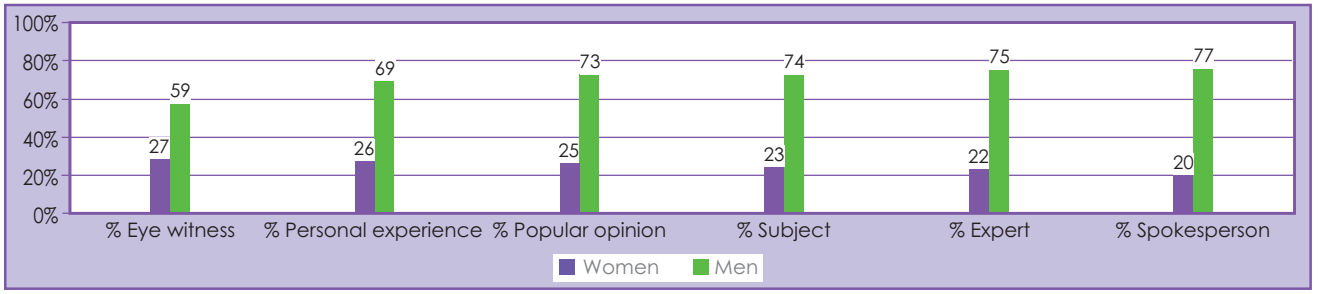
Figure 9.10: Topics covered by the media in SADC



Source: Gender and Media Progress Study 2020.

Figure 9.10 shows GMPS research on the most common story topics, with economy (19%), social (15%), sports (12%), and politics and government news (11%) continuing to dominate coverage in Southern Africa, as they did in 2015. SRHR, a new topic area of study introduced in the GMPS 2020 ranks amongst the least covered at 2%. This broad category included news about menstrual health, maternal health, safe abortion, GBV, HIV and AIDS, sexual diversity, harmful practices, and sex education. Within the SRHR topic category, stories about GBV accounted for half of all coverage, while news outlets cover stories about sexual diversity, harmful practices and menstrual health least at 2% each.

Figure 9.11: Function of news sources in SADC



Source: Gender and Media Progress Study 2020.

Figure 9.11 divides all sources into categories, with telling results that underscore the other GMPS findings about the roles for women that society most values. Men dominate in all areas, especially those associated with expertise and authority: spokespersons (77%) and experts (75%).

The numbers of women sources go up when women speak to journalists not as experts or subjects of stories, but instead to provide personal testimony or eyewitness accounts. This constitutes subtle stereotypes that relegate women to contributing most often on "soft issues."

Coverage of SRHR

Gender activists view the media as a critical tool for raising public awareness about SRHR issues and women's access to, and control of, SRHR services. Because of this, the role of journalists should go beyond informing and educating to analysing and providing critical reportage and investigations on SRHR issues. The COVID-19 pandemic illustrated the important need for media practitioners to embrace their roles linked to advocacy and watchdog journalism when reporting on critical health issues.

> Mass media can contribute to efforts to address SRHR challenges by focusing public attention on these issues

[55] Oronje et al. 2011. Engaging media in communicating research on sexual and reproductive health and rights in sub-Saharan Africa: experiences and lessons learned in Health Research Policy and Systems Volume 9, (Supplement1): S7. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/51224982_Engaging_media_in_communicating_research_on_sexual_and_reproductive_health_and_rights_in_sub-Saharan_Africa_Experiences_and_lessons_learned, accessed 20 June 2021

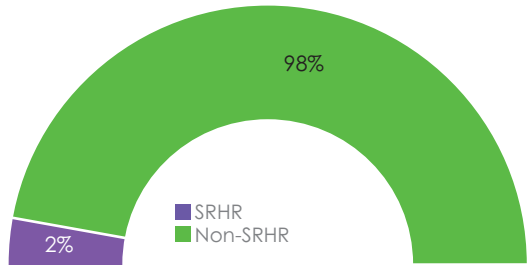
The mass media can contribute meaningfully to efforts to address SRHR challenges by focusing public attention on these issues, making them more visible in development discourse, and providing accurate and comprehensive information.[55]

According to the Panos Institute Southern Africa, a regional communication for development organisation, "Journalists must contextualise issues and strive for objectivity and balance. Because human rights are more than just legal issues, there must be a reflection on the impact of the promotion or the abuse of human rights on real people's lives."

It behoves good journalists and reporters, especially those reporting on politics, health and SHRH, to have a broad understanding of women's rights to health and of the multiple factors at play that may impede enjoyment of those rights. They can do this by employing a rights-based approach in reporting - a method that some media experts see as essential to all types and beats of journalism.

An article by Rosanne Anholt[56] notes that, if citizens read or hear about family planning methods that emphasise the dangers of the procedure or the possible negative consequences, they may hesitate to use them. On the other hand, if articles about family planning methods focus on women's rights to decide and have a voice and choice on whether and when to have children - more women may very well consider using a family planning method. Despite their power to promote good SRH outcomes, media often fail to prioritise these issues or accurately report them. Media coverage of reproductive health issues remains inadequate in sub-Saharan African media partly due to the weak capacity and motivation for reporting these issues by media practitioners.[57]

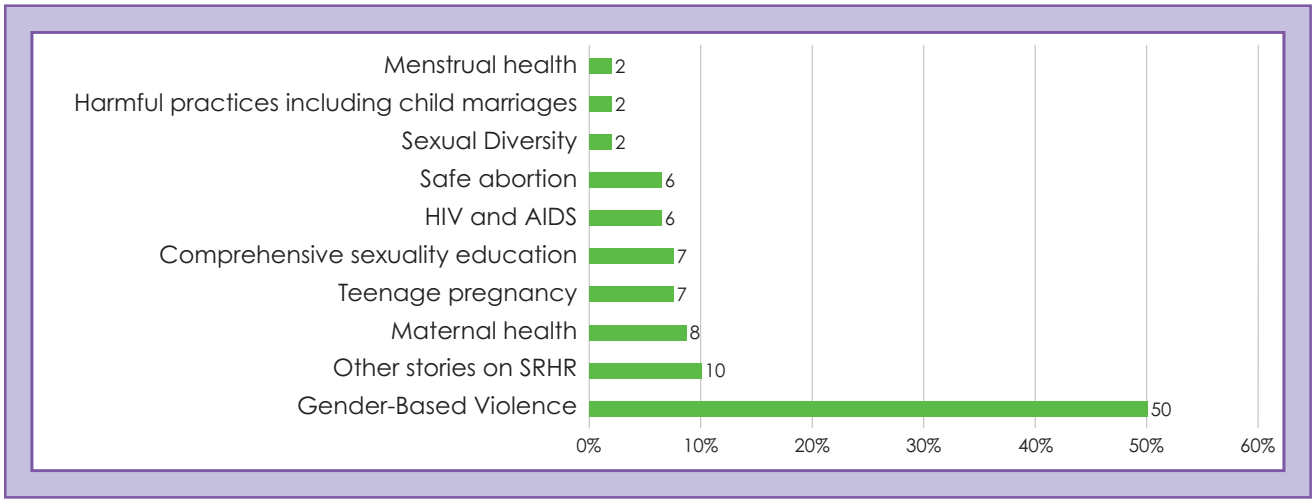
Figure 9.12: Coverage of SRHR in SADC



Source: Gender and Media Progress Study 2020.

As noted earlier, Figure 9.12 shows that SRHR remains far from a common theme in the media, constituting just 2% of all stories covered during the monitoring period: 325 news stories overall across various news media.

Figure 9.13: SRHR topic breakdown



Source: Gender and Media Progress Study 2020.

[56] Anholt, R. 2016 Writing women's reproductive health: A Uganda case study in the Health Journalists Network Union. The Health Digest. Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights for Youth and Adolescents. Issue 08 P32-35 Available at http://www.ideas42.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/SRHR-draftlay.pdf, accessed 20 June 2021.

[57] Oronje et al. 2011. Engaging media in communicating research on sexual and reproductive health and rights in sub-Saharan Africa: experiences and lessons learned in Health Research Policy and Systems Volume 9, (Supplement1): S7. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/51224982_Engaging_media_in_communicating_research_on_sexual_and_reproductive_health_and_rights_in_sub-Saharan_Africa_Experiences_and_lessons_learned, accessed 20 June 2021.


GBV: police can't cope

INVESTIGATIONS: OUT OF 10 000 CASES, JUST 2 000 HAVE BEEN DEALT WITH

'Need for more teachers will be clear later'

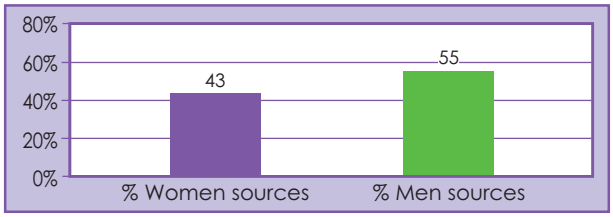
PAINT BY NUMBERS

A story from The Citizen in South Africa during the GMPS monitoring period in September 2020 with the headline, "GBV: Police can't cope." .

Figure 9.13 illustrates that some topics under the SRHR umbrella received much more media attention, especially GBV. Stories about GBV represent the most covered SRHR news topic by far, making up 50% of all the SRHR news stories covered in the media.

Least covered topics include menstrual health, harmful practices and sexual diversity. News owners and editors often share some of the blame for the lack of coverage of SRHR stories, according to some media experts. They believe the lack of stories on SRHR link to the fact that journalists lack the support, capacity and knowledge required to report informatively on these topics. Thus, leaders in the media industry should look into training opportunities for their teams.

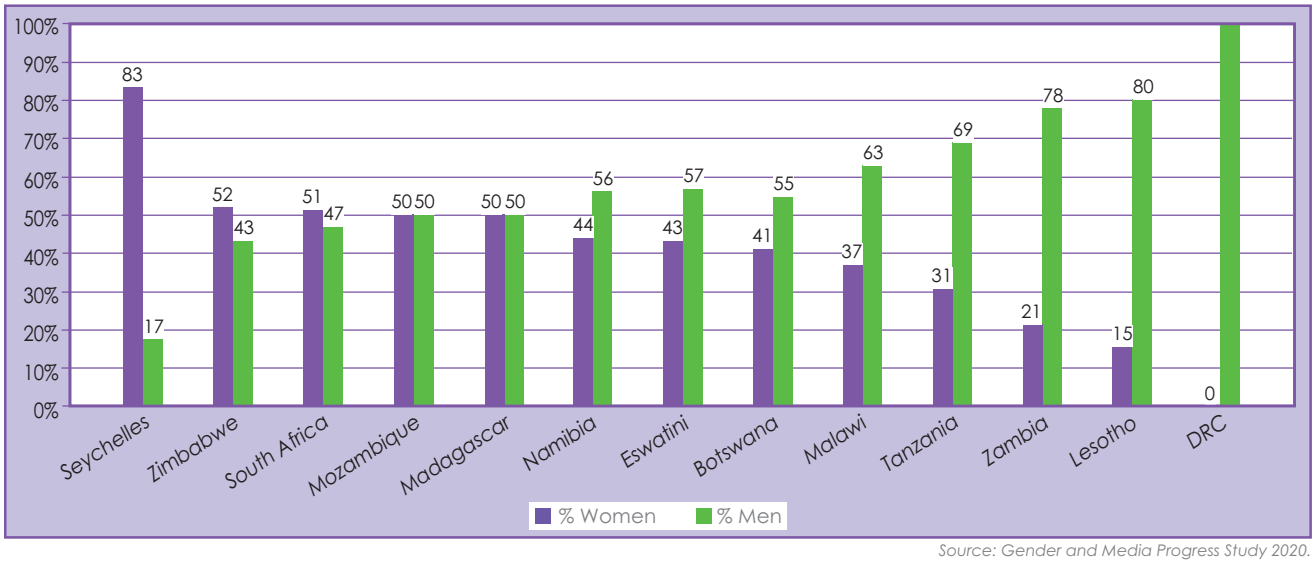
Figure 9.14: Who speaks on SRHR in SADC



Source: Gender and Media Progress Study 2020.

Even in coverage of SRHR issues, men's voices still eclipse women's voices. Figure 9.14 illustrates this, showing that journalists accessed women sources on SRHR in only 43% of stories. In this category, researchers classified some sources as "other," which means a source's sex was unclear. However, men's voices still outnumbered women's in SRHR stories at 55%. This imbalance may be due to frequent presentation of SRHR issues as they link to political controversies rather than within stories about healthcare, sexuality, or maternal and child health.

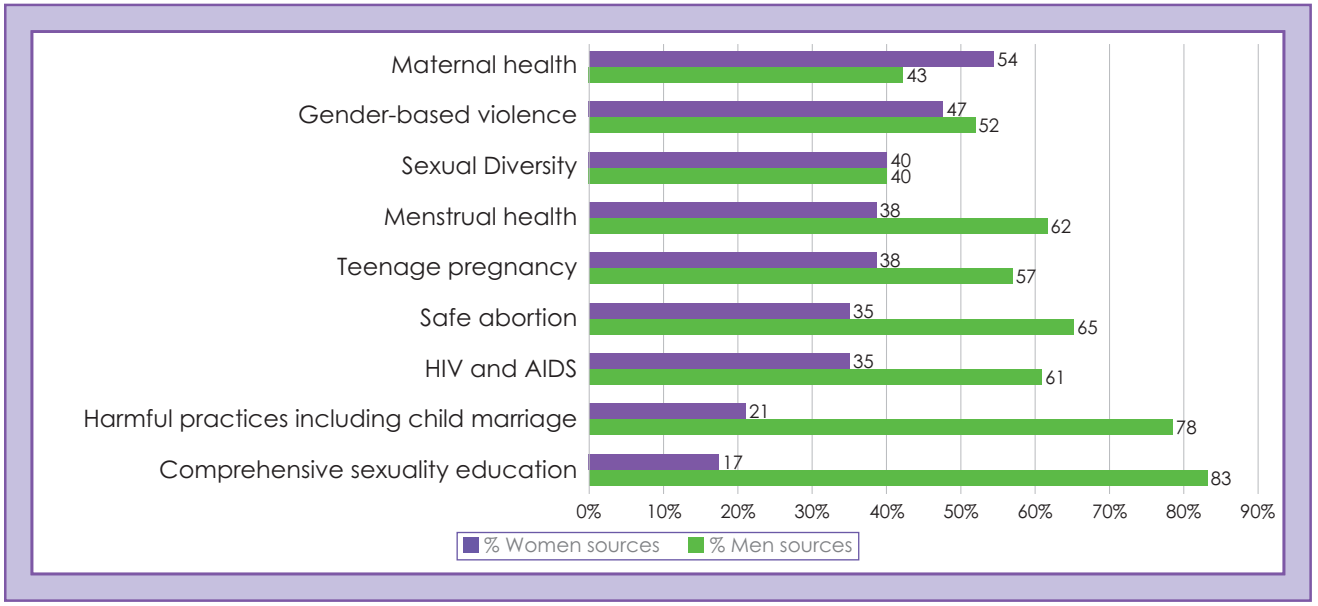
Figure 9.15: Who speaks on SRHR in SADC by country



Source: Gender and Media Progress Study 2020.

Figure 9.15 shows that, although the overall regional average of women sources in SRHR stories ranked 43%, researchers found vast differences between member states, ranging from no women sources in SRHR stories in DRC to 83% in Seychelles. The research found that women's views and voices on SRHR constituted 50% or more in six countries: Angola, Madagascar, Mozambique, Seychelles South Africa and Zimbabwe.

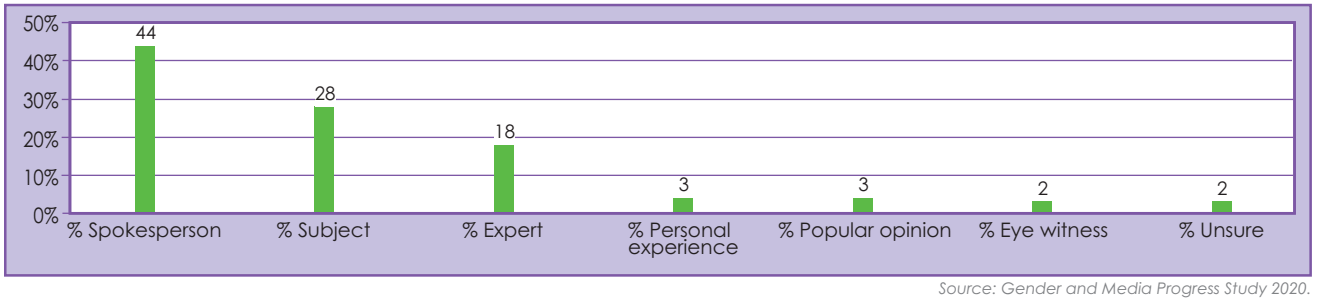
Figure 9.16: Who speaks on SRHR sub-topics



Source: Gender and Media Progress Study 2020.

Figure 9.16 illustrates that, when it comes to stories about SRHR topics, women's voices appear as systematically stifled as news sources. Out of the nine SRHR topic areas analysed, GMPS researchers found that women marginally speak more often as sources in only one topic category, maternal health.

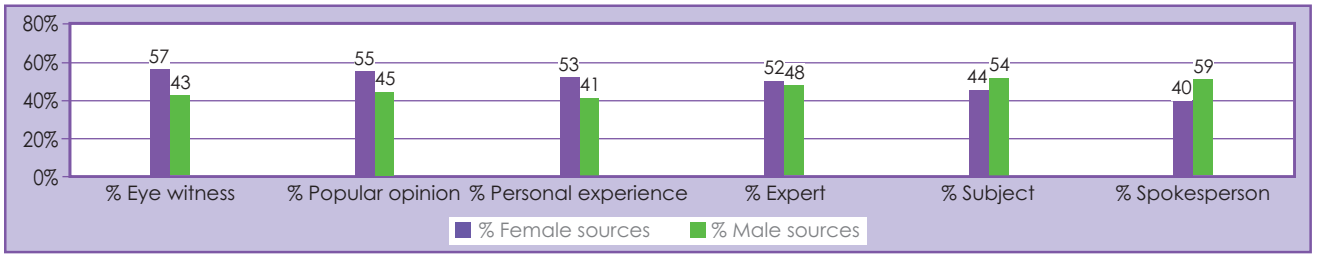
Figure 9.17: Function of SRHR sources in SADC



Source: Gender and Media Progress Study 2020.

Figure 9.17 illustrates that official views from spokespeople and experts, as opposed to personal experiences, dominate SRHR coverage in the region. Spokespeople constituted 44% of sources, while personal experiences ranked among the lowest of all source categories, at 3%. This shows that the media frequently misses opportunities to tell the real stories of girls, women and families affected by SRHR issues - those who researchers and gender activists know face considerable challenges in realising their sexual and reproductive health rights.

Figure 9.18: Function of SRHR sources by sex

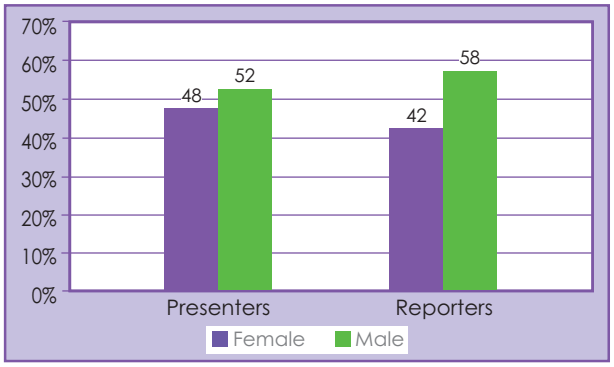


Source: Gender and Media Progress Study 2020.

A role analysis by sex of sources provides insight into whether media accesses women more as experts (a role that relies more on authoritative knowledge) or as sources to talk about their personal views and experiences. Figure 9.18 illustrates that women feature more often in SADC media both as eyewitnesses and to share popular opinions about SRHR issues. Women also feature more in SRHR news stories as experts, which may be due to the predominance of women's rights organisations and women's rights activists quoted in these stories.

Figure 9.19 highlights that men reporters and presenters[58] surpass women reporters and presenters in coverage of SRHR. Only 42% of women reporters identified in the monitoring period covered SRHR issues, while 48% of women presented on SRHR stories. The fact that men outnumber women in covering SRHR issues may be one reason why SADC media speak with more male sources on SRHR topics.

Figure 9.19: Women and men reporters and presenters on SRHR topics



Source: Gender and Media Progress Study 2020.



Media advocates put safe abortion on the political agenda in Malawi

During the GMPS monitoring period, coverage of Malawi's abortion bill represented one of the key areas of interest. Discussions related to the bill occurred against the backdrop of Malawi's contested election. During this time, Malawi's abortion bill became a contentious issue and one prominent media agency, Centre for Solutions Journalism (CSJ), declared the year 2020, "the year for the new abortion law."

Safe abortion has long been a topical issue in Malawi as policymakers, government, the church, and citizens have different views on the issue and the bill in question. CSJ believes that Malawi lawmakers should address the country's poor maternal and child health statistics and abide by international treaties to which the country is a signatory, and take action.

[58] This is as defined by bylines and on-screen appearances.


Weekend NATION

DEAD ON ARRIVAL

ABORTION BILL

- 80% of MPs to reject Bill
- 18% undecided
- 1.4% support it

Termination of PREGNANCY BILL

Fuel transporters confront govt

Thanks to coordinated media advocacy efforts, stories like this one in *Weekend Nation* on 26 September 2020 have ensured that Malawi's safe abortion bill receives adequate and informed debate, even during the COVID-19 crisis.

The approaches and methods adopted by CSJ in its advocacy include meetings, research, and dissemination of information on the subject of abortion. The College of Medicine under the University of Malawi has also provided research on maternal, sexual and reproductive health, most of which forms the basis for law reform on termination of pregnancy. With this statistical evidence, the public have been getting a truer picture of the gravity of the problem of unsafe abortion.

CSJ also runs a multimedia programme to mobilise support for the proposed bill among faith-based groups, policymakers and the public. The programmes include trainings, publishing newspaper columns along with opinion and analysis, and *Chichewa* language radio programmes on local radio stations called *Uchembere ndi Ufulu*, loosely translated as "motherhood and rights." CSJ also uses these platforms to engage experts and the public on the issue of safe abortion. So far, with the goal of providing information on the bill and neutralising anti-choice activities, CSJ has conducted trainings for MPs, religious leaders, NGOs and youth groups

It also aims to share stories and give voice to survivors and those affected by the consequences of unsafe abortion. CSJ documents these stories so that audiences have a picture of the magnitude of the problem in Malawi.

In 2020, CSJ premiered an SRHR documentary on three national television channels: Times, Zodiak Broadcasting Station (ZBS) and Mzati as well as social media platforms. Titled *Mdula Moyo wa Chinunu* (Silent Killer on the Prowl), the documentary details real stories from women in Lilongwe and Blantyre who died due to pregnancy-related causes. It captures untold stories of women who suffered violent crimes, including rape. These women told reporters of their fear to report these issues. The documentary also captures stories of women who died from other preventable maternal health conditions.

The documentary features prominent Malawians, including traditional chiefs. Through it, CSJ hopes to reach one million people, especially those in the rural areas. The programmes have allowed robust debate on the abortion law, even amidst political turbulence and the recent COVID-19 global pandemic.


Chisale Mhango is a gynaecologist with Malawi's College of Medicine who has come out in favour of safe abortions. Photo courtesy of Nyasa Times

CSJ has also been working with experts to provide evidence-based background and context for the termination of pregnancy bill. This includes Chisale Mhango, a gynaecologist with the College of Medicine who has a column in the *Daily Times* on safe abortion and the proposed law.

Part of the campaign has been to challenge the many myths about the bill and the potential political consequences. Drawing examples from other countries, Mhango observes that passing safe abortion bills has not necessarily led to MPs or other democratically elected legislators losing their seats.

Mhango has also written about the misconceptions linked to religion, arguing that abortion is a health issue, not a religious one. He notes that experiences from other countries show that abortion rates actually decline once

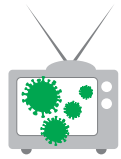
politicians reform abortion laws to better protect women and give them more choice. Another misconception he addresses connects to the concern among some that Malawi does not have the capacity to cope with delivery of safe abortion. On this issue, he observes that the law reform likely means that the number of abortions will remain the same; it will only shift them from unsafe abortions to safe abortions.

CSJ also supports articles published by opinion leaders, including people like Pastor Esitedi Chikopa, for example, who said the deaths of two members in his congregation due to unsafe abortion sparked his interest in the debate. He says the condemnation of women who procure abortion distresses him, observing that: "As master condemners, we have no compassion for many women who induce abortion in Malawi annually. We have no concern for women who die due to unsafe abortions because we are disciples of Biblical literalism instead of being experts in practical hermeneutics (the branch of knowledge that deals with interpretation, especially of the Bible or literary texts)."

The prominence given to the subject has allowed the mainstream media to adopt and champion the subject for further exploration. The signing of a communique to lawmakers by chiefs, religious and political leaders encouraging them to pass the safe abortion bill reflects an increased understanding of the bill and acceptance of its benefits.

Source: Maclan Kanyangwa submitted to Gender Links as part of the Political Discourse Analysis

COVID-19 in the news

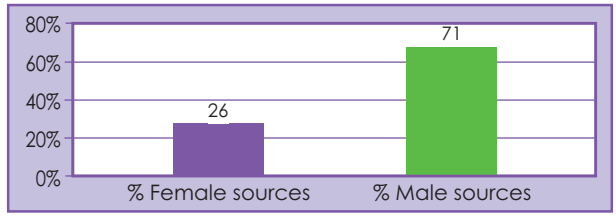


COVID-19 was clearly the biggest story of 2020 - both in SADC and around the world. Across the region, most journalists turned their attention to focus on coverage of the pandemic. This included government responses, information about lockdowns, infection numbers, deaths, and the effects on the virus on the region's economies, politics, sports, and so on.

COVID-19 was clearly the biggest story of 2020 - both in SADC and around the world

To add to this body of knowledge on gender and media during COVID-19, the GMPS also monitored how the media covered the pandemic and whose views and perspectives featured in the news. This section analyses news coverage of COVID-19 stories by assessing three indicators: sources, reporters, and topics.

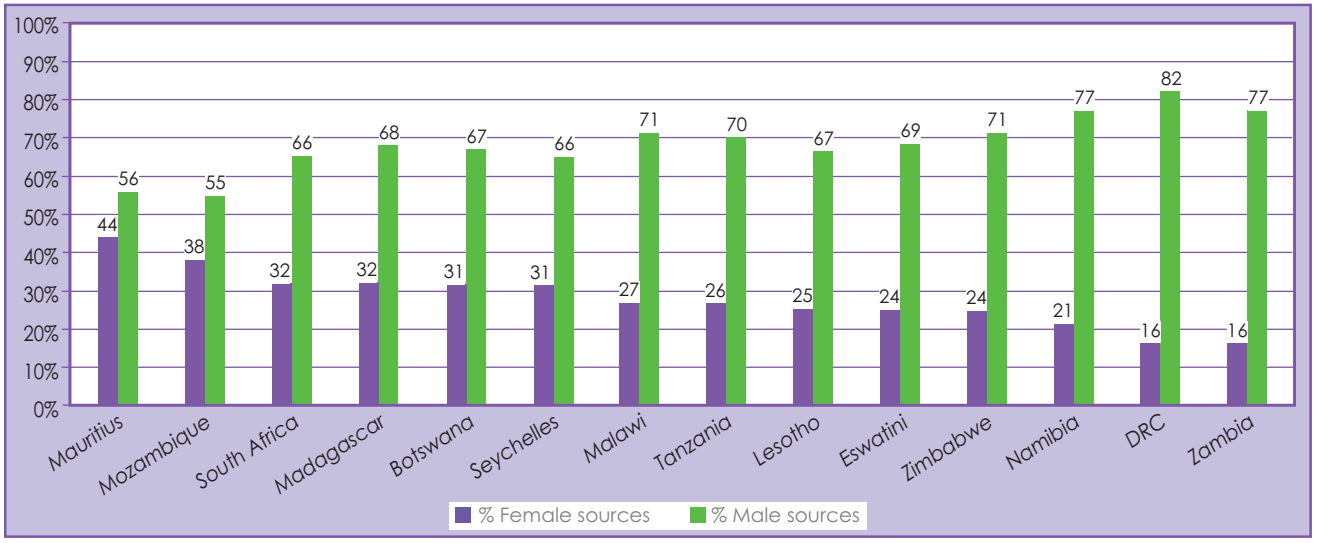
Figure 9.20: Women sources in stories about COVID-19



Source: Gender and Media Progress Study 2020.

Figure 9.20 shows that stories about COVID-19 mirrored other SRHR and health stories in the region by turning mostly to men as sources, with women comprising only one of every four people quoted. Unfortunately, in times of crisis, journalists may tend to revert to official or established sources, who will most often be men.

Figure 9.21: Women and men sources on COVID-19 in SADC



Source: Gender and Media Progress Study 2020.

Figure 9.21 shows the proportion of men and women sources in COVID-19 stories across all Southern African countries. The proportion of women sources across the region varies, ranging from a low of 16% in Zambia and DRC to 44% in Mauritius. As researches found elsewhere throughout the GMPS research, the proportion of women voices on COVID-19-related news came in lower than that of men across all countries.

Restrictions on the use of non-government sources in Botswana and Zambia meant few experts spoke about COVID-19 in the media

Function of sources

The absence of women's perspectives in COVID-19-related news coverage means that women have limited influence over the framing of the crisis and, consequently, limited influence over policy decisions related to it. As a result, women face a greater risk of marginalisation amid the most significant global health crisis of our lifetimes. Restrictions on the use of sources outside government, implemented in Botswana and Zambia, resulted in very few experts speaking about the virus. Governments have so far represented the main sources of information on COVID-19 even as they juggle multiple priorities, including the ongoing struggle to procure vaccines.

[59] Internews. 2020. "Things will never be the same again": COVID-19 effects on freedom of expression in Southern Africa, 2020. Johannesburg. Internews. Available at https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/internews_effects_of_covid19_on_freedom_of_expression_in_select_sadc_countries_2.pdf, accessed 3 July 2021.

Zambia: Telling the lived realities of COVID-19



Couple lives to tell COVID story

Lawrence, Nakasafya were showing symptoms of COVID-19

Lawrence and Nakasafya Thompson's story appeared in the *Zambia Daily Mail* on 7 September 2020. Photo: *Zambia Daily Mail*

This story by Zio Mwale for the *Zambia Daily Mail* of 7 September 2020 focused on the COVID-19 experiences of one family affected by the pandemic.

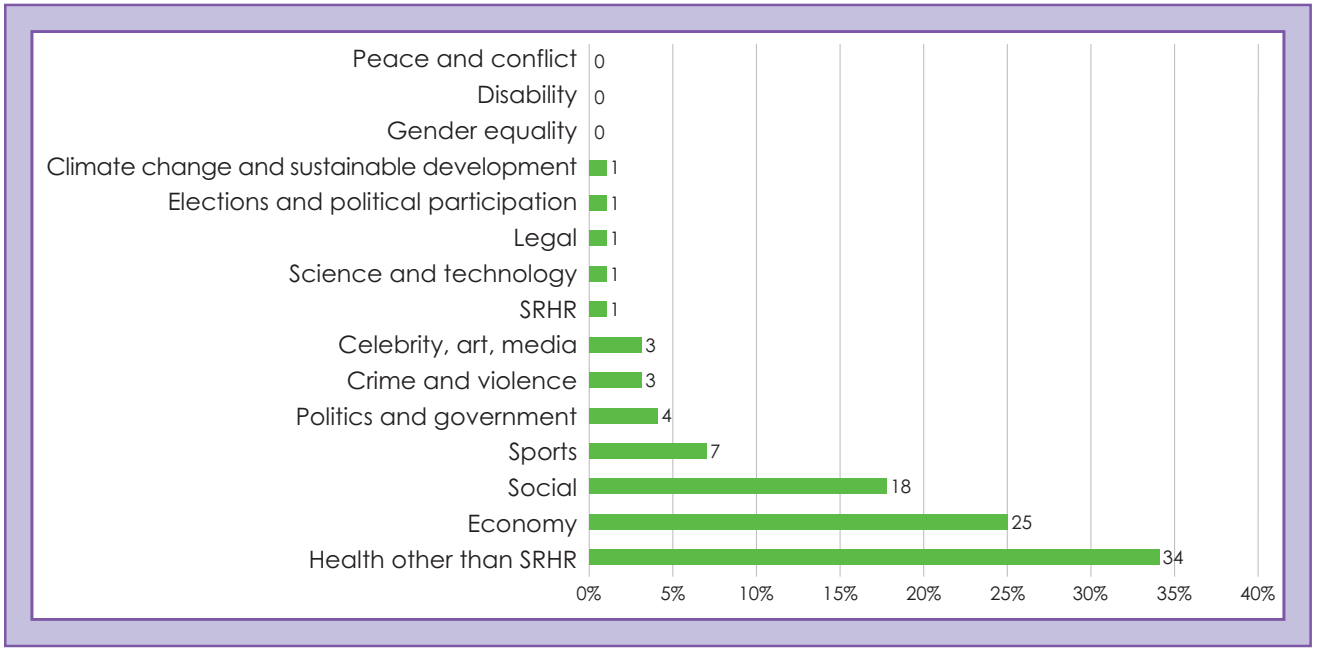
"Couple lives to tell COVID story," noted the headline for the article, which tells the story of a couple in Zambia who both contracted COVID-19. Mwale, a male journalist, speaks to both Lawrence and Nakasafya Thompson and shares their story, although he details more of Lawrence's story.

The journalist highlights the sources in similar ways and provides both with an opportunity to tell their stories in the hopes that it might help other Zambians during the pandemic.

Mwale mentions other family members but does not access their voices. Although the front-page story focuses on the subjects in the story - arguably those most affected by it - other diverse perspectives would have improved it. This could include neighbours, healthcare professionals or other family members affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Source: Perpetual Sichikwenkwe GMPS Qualitative case study

Figure 9.22: Topics related to COVID-19



Source: Gender and Media Progress Study 2020.

Figure 9.22 shows that journalists covered COVID-19 primarily within its context as a health news story. Many also closely linked the crisis to its impact on the region's economies (25%), social life (18%), sports (7%) and politics and governance (4%).However, journalists did not pay nearly enough attention to how the COVID-19 pandemic affected issues like SRHR (1%). For example, few stories addressed the challenges in access to SRHR services such as birth control and safe abortion during lockdown. Under the Southern Africa Gender Protocol Alliance #VoiceandChoice campaign, GL sought to influence reporting on COVID-19 by supporting journalists to produce in-depth stories on COVID-19 and SRHR throughout the year.

ICTs and women's empowerment



SADC Protocol Article 31: State parties shall put in place information and communication technology policies and laws in the social economic and political development arena for women's empowerment regardless of race, age, religion or class. These policies and laws shall include specific targets developed through an open and participatory process in order to ensure women's and girl's access to ICTs.

Goal 5 of the SDGs highlights the role of media and ICTs in women's advancement, encouraging member states to enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular ICTs, to promote women's empowerment.[60]

ICTs continue to grow as effective tools for women to amplify their voices and help them mobilise to advance their concerns. However, for more women to achieve this, they need meaningful access to ICTs. Access can be enabled or stunted by several factors, including affordability, relevant content, skills, and security. Research on the topic notes that ICTs: "allow isolated women to gain access to information that was not previously made available, thus helping them to become better informed members of society and consequently empowering them to speak up."[61]

Men control most ICTs used as development tools as they more often have the necessary resources, leaving women at a disadvantage in accessing productive and important information. Social and professional networks provide essential platforms for men and women to share ideas online. However, due to limited access to ICTs, particularly in rural areas where connectivity continues to be a challenge, it is difficult for women to access ICTs to improve livelihoods.



In **Namibia**, policymakers developed a bill on access to information and a draft information policy to ensure access to ICTs; however, neither address the different and unique needs of women and men. The Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGECW) provided inputs to the draft information policy to ensure that it incorporates specific provisions for access to ICTs by women.



The ICT policy of **Seychelles** is gender neutral and does not address gender in detail. However, men and women in the country both

[60] SDG (5.b)
[61] Hafkin and Taggart. 2001. Gender, Information Technology and Developing Countries: An Analytic Study. Washington D.C.: USAID, June 2001 http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pnacm871.pdf

have good access to ICTs compared to many other countries in the region. Member states like Seychelles have struggled to implement ICT policies that address the gendered elements of access and other challenges unique to women. As more member states develop frameworks like the Seychelles ICT policy, they must critically address the digital gender divide and include strategies or programmes on mainstreaming gender in the ICT sector.[62]



The 2021 Cybercrimes Act in **South Africa** provides an opportunity to protect the dignity of women from practices such as gender trolling, threats and revenge pornography online. Under this new Act, South African lawmakers see three types of messages - which include data messages on social media platforms - as "harmful." Any person who violates the act faces a fine, imprisonment of up to 15 years, or both. Harmful data messages include:

- Data messages inciting violence or damage to property;
- Messages threatening people with violence or damage to their property; and
- Data messages containing intimate images sent without consent.[63]

Although the proliferation of ICTs provides many positive possibilities, it adds another dimension to gender inequality, according to research from the SADC region. "New media can also be a double-edged sword for women's rights. Much as women can claim this space to make their voice count, it is also a space that can be used to fuel violence, conflict and misogyny."[64] The struggles that women face in daily life often extend onto their private digital media platforms.

Online GBV

Apart from the above restrictions inherent in legal and policy frameworks that limit freedom of expression and opinion, the threat of online violence against women continues to grow in the region. Promoting gender equality - especially women's rights to equal and free participation - represents an integral component of freedom of expression and opinion. Thus, gender activists maintain that online GBV also entails a freedom of expression issue - and one that legislators and media leaders must urgently address.

In 2017, in a report on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity, United Nations Secretary General António Guterres noted that women journalists disproportionally and increasingly face online threats of violence, including sexual violence, trolling, doxing and being "swatted." The latter is a harassment tactic involving deceiving an emergency service into sending a police or other emergency service response team to another person's address.

Guterres said, "Women who cover topics such as politics, law, economics, sport, women's rights, gender and feminism are particularly likely to become targets of online violence."[65]

The perpetuation of online GBV limits public participation that could support the actualisation of human rights such as freedom of expression. Some journalists have dubbed the online violence against women journalists the "new frontline in journalism safety" - a particularly dangerous trend for women journalists.[66] With all this violence at play, activists note that policymakers must remember that attacks

[62] SADC and SARDC. 2018. SADC Gender and Development Monitor 2018. SADC, SARDC. Gaborone, Harare.
[63] Kahla, C and Hlatshaneni, C. "Being an internet troll can land you in jail - what you need to know." The Citizen, 3 June 2021. Available at https://citizen.co.za/news/2512967/cyber-crimes-bill-parliament-act-2/, accessed 16 July 2021.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Guterres, A. 2017. Report by the secretary General: The safety of journalists and the issue of impunity seventy-second session Item 73 (b) of the provisional agenda. A/72/290 - E - A/72/290 -Desktop (undocs.org), accessed 2 July 2021.
[66] UNESCO.2020. Online violence Against Women Journalists: A Global Snapshot of Incidence and Impacts.

against female journalists pose a clear threat not only to their safety and well-being, but also to the diversity of the press and to freedom of expression.[67]

The 2018 *Glass Ceilings* study in South Africa also found that cyber misogyny represents a growing threat. South Africa has limited ways to protect women journalists targeted through cyber misogyny, an increasingly threatening form of silencing of women journalists. Gender activists have called for a multi stakeholder approach to tackle the issue. In the study, while only 6% of official respondents felt cyber misogyny is an issue in South Africa, 30% of women and 9% of men agreed that women journalists experience cyber violence. Cyber misogyny may just be emerging, but like the speed of the social media that spawned it, it risks spiralling out of control if not seriously addressed. The study also notes that cyber misogyny is both a cause and consequence of the sexist stereotypes that pervade media houses. The surest long-term solutions involve ridding not only our newsrooms, but our societies, of the misogyny that finds its way to, and mutates on, social media platforms. Any solution must involve both systemic and holistic solutions.

Women journalists disproportionally and increasingly face online threats of violence

Big tech commits to tackle online abuse of women[68]



In July 2021, four of the world's largest tech companies - Facebook, Google, TikTok and Twitter - announced a bold package of commitments to tackle online abuse and improve women's safety on their platforms at the UN Generation Equality Forum in Paris.

The four companies committed to:

Build better ways for women to curate their safety online by:

- Offering more granular settings (e.g. who can see, share, comment or reply to posts);
- Using more simple and accessible language throughout the user experience;
- Providing easy navigation and access to safety tools; and
- Reducing the burden on women by proactively reducing the amount of abuse they see.

Implement improvements to reporting systems by:

- Offering users the ability to track and manage their reports;
- Enabling greater capacity to address context and/or language;
- Providing more policy and product guidance when reporting abuse; and
- Establish additional ways for women to access help and support during the reporting process.

[67] UNESCO 2019 . UNESCO stands up against the online harassment of women journalists. Available at https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-stands-against-online-harassment-women-journalists, accessed 16 July 2021.
[68] Web Foundation.2021. Facebook, Google, TikTok and Twitter make unprecedented commitments to tackle the abuse of women on their platformshttps://webfoundation.org/2021/07/generation-equality-commitments/, accessed 1 July 2021.

SADC Protocol Article 29: State parties shall ensure that gender is mainstreamed in all information, communication and media policies, programmes, laws and training in accordance with the Protocol on Culture, Information and Sport.

Media training aims to equip journalists and reporters with a thorough understanding of issues and newsgathering tools. It should assist them in developing and producing media content in a gender responsive manner. However, comprehensive and accurate media reporting on issues such as SRHR presents a challenge for many journalists as pernicious myths and misconceptions abound on SRHR topics.

Yet, media's role in advancing SRHR and particularly the bodily autonomy and integrity of African women and girls is fundamental to respecting and fulfilling women's human rights.[69]

Consistent and accurate media training on the topic thus continues to be of paramount importance.

Gender Links and other likeminded organisations in the SADC region have conducted training across Southern Africa on strengthening SRHR reporting and helping the media to understand the subject. Training also provides journalists with much-needed direction on informative, entertaining and educational storytelling that leverages and highlights existing SRHR laws and policies.

SADC: GL strengthens reporting on key SRHR issues



Selima Henoka, a journalist from the Namibia Broadcasting Corporation (centre), speaks with Gladness Munuo of the Gender and Media in Southern Africa-Tanzania Network (left) and Malawian journalist Penelope Paliani-Kamanga during an SRHR workshop in Johannesburg in April 2019.

Photo: *Tarisai Nyamweda*

In 2019, Gender Links trained 109 journalists[70] from across Southern Africa on SRHR reporting techniques in an effort to strengthen reporting on these topics in the region.

Workshops also aimed to increase media coverage of SRHR from a human rights perspective, including stories that challenge discriminatory social norms and stereotypes. The sessions provided an opportunity to raise awareness on the SRHR SADC Strategy and SRHR provisions in the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and related instruments.

GL took a hands-on and practical approach, linking content knowledge to core journalism skills and technical tools. The organisation also gave journalists small grants to allow them to go out and undertake field reporting whilst receiving support from a skilled mentor.

At the end of each training session, participants produced news stories for their media houses on various SRHR thematic areas, including menstrual

[69] The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET). 2019. SRHR media training. FEMNET. Nairobi. Available at Nairobi https://femnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/FEMNET-SRHR-Media-Training-Manual-2019 .pdf, accessed 16 July 2021.
[70] This figure is from seven workshops.

health, maternal health, Comprehensive Sexual Education (CSE) and services, child marriages, teenage pregnancies, safe and legal abortion, HIV and AIDS, sexual diversity and GBV. Journalists produced more than 100 news stories in the mainstream media in 15 SADC countries, which the GL News Service republished. The linkages that these journalists made between SRHR and key policy issues led to new and innovative SRHR coverage in the region.

GL took a similar approach to support the media in strengthening reporting on Women's Political Participation in Botswana, Eswatini and Zimbabwe, reporting the SDGs in Tanzania and supporting gender sensitivity in news and entertainment media in South African broadcast media.

Conclusion

The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development is one of the most comprehensive tools available to help the media promote equal participation and voice. Yet while the Protocol foregrounds the importance of gender equality in the media, journalistic representations continue to create and recreate discourses that impede processes of gender transformation in and through the sector.

Progress in achieving gender equality in and through the media as envisioned by this SADC Protocol occurs at an extremely slow pace, as evidenced by the 2020 GMPS. Although the region has seen some gains, it regularly logs as many setbacks, even as it grapples with new and emerging threats to women working in the sector. After many years of activism and pressure, representation of women in media is finally edging towards equality. Indeed, the region has also seen improvements in coverage on some topics, including the work of inspiring female journalists covering the COVID-19 pandemic despite the risks.

However, not enough reporters and presenters strive to access women sources. Journalists, both men and women alike, simply do not interview and quote enough women; which means they misrepresent issues and the societies in which we live, where women make up more than 50% of the population. Men still largely tell stories that primarily affect women, and men often frame these stories in terms of how men understand, relate to, and experience them, once again leaving women behind.

Observations from the GMPS show that there is a need for continued media engagement to strengthen news coverage. The media needs support to build and strengthen its capacity and its ability to view news through a gender lens. New and exciting developments, including those linked to our digital era, drive media and storytelling more than ever before. Thus, activists, researchers and governments must follow suit and ensure their research, policymaking and programming is easily available for media to reference and understand. Clear, concise and accessible information, research and data will enhance media's coverage of issues such as SRHR.



Eswatini journalist Lofana Mavusu presents his learnings at the 50-50 #VoiceandChoice summit in March 2021 in Piggs Peak, Swaziland.
Photo: *Gender Links*

Next steps

Strengthen monitoring: The sector needs to both champion the use of, and help gather, more good quality and reliable data on existing and emerging gender and media issues that interest practitioners as well as academia, civil society and government. This is a key stepping-stone to strengthening advocacy and policy change. Media monitoring is an expensive venture so agencies that do it will require financial support to execute it and share it.

Expert databases: Media houses and other industry leaders should compile lists of women experts on a wide range of topics that journalists can consult and use to offset their tendency to revert to official male experts.

Revive advocacy campaigns: Using the data and best practices coming out of the GMPS and GMMP research, women's rights activists need to commit to sustained campaigns. There is need for better collaboration on gender and media activities, as well as regional campaigns that build on the findings of these studies. It is high time the region revived and renewed its gender and media movement, including by employing digital media in new ways, to help finance campaigns and ensure sustainable and ongoing media development work in the region.

Support post-GMPS seminars: GL and partners in the Gender Protocol Alliance will take forward the results of the GMPS through seminars and advocacy on digital equality and gender-sensitive approaches to freedom of expression. The work will highlight the findings of the GMPS research and spread public awareness on the need to increase women's voices and concerns. It will also hold news media accountable for professionalism in journalism through fair, balanced and accurate portrayals of women in the media as a way to contribute to the achievement of gender equality. Country GMPS launches will align with barometer launches to disseminate critical and current information in each country.

Taking stock post-COVID-19: As the pandemic evolves and eventually subsides, it will be important for regional gender and media activists to analyse learnings from the pandemic as they pertain to the industry. This includes research into the successes and failures of public health and SRHR reporting during the pandemic and lockdowns. Journalists should also explore how various political approaches to these issues helped and hindered the spread of COVID-19 and the economic and social fallout from it.



Khalila Abdul and Alicia Evance, then journalism students at the University of Dar es Salaam, review pictures taken at the Gender and Media Summit in Tanzania in 2018.
Photo: *Aikha Kimaro*

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