Gender, Diversity & GBV

in South African TV

2018 - 2019

Published by:

Partnerships for Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls in Southern Africa Programme (PfP)

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Design and layout:

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Pretoria, May 2019

MANAGEMENT FOREWORD

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains one of the biggest challenges and obstacles to development in South Africa with rape, domestic violence and intimate-partner violence particularly prevalent. An average of 100 rapes are recorded daily and this does not account for unreported incidents. According to South Africa's 2016 Demographic and Health Survey one in five women over the age of 18 has experienced physical violence at least once in her lifetime. The rate of femicide in South Africa is four times that of the global average, meaning everyday three women die at the hands of their intimate partners. The crisis of GBV and femicide in South Africa is well documented and reflects a society that is saturated in patriarchy, unequal gender dynamics and daily gross human rights violations against women and children. While the concept of inherited-violence from violent and discriminatory systems of colonialism and apartheid is often cited as cause and driver of GBV in South Africa, it is also understood that one sector that has some influence on societies norms and perceptions around gender relations and violence as well as general knowledge of GBV and forms of support is the media and creative sector.

In late 2017 the German Development Cooperation (GIZ) in South Africa, started a regional programme focussed on prevention, the **'Partnerships for Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls in Southern Africa Programme' (PfP).** The main objective of the programme is to strengthen multi-stakeholder approaches that join governmental, civil society and private sector efforts to prevent violence against women and girls. Beyond South Africa, the programme works in Zambia and Lesotho with several Flagship Projects that work in different sectors and through independent initiatives implemented in each country.

The **United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN Women)** as well as GIZ view the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by UN Member States in September 2015 as the universal roadmap for people and planet, addressing the key challenges of the 21st century, such as poverty, inequality, and climate change. Women's empowerment is recognized as a pre-condition to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the core of the 2030 Agenda.

In line with the SDGs, the UN Women global initiative "Step it Up for Gender Equality" invites all partners to Step it Up! This includes media partners. The Step it Up Global Media Compact spearheaded by UN Women, aims to be a mutually beneficial agreement through which media partners are invited to scale up their focus on women's rights and gender equality issues through high-quality coverage and editorial decisions, complemented by gender-sensitive corporate practices.

It is in front of this background that the GIZ-PFP and UN Women South Africa have jointly started the **Media Compact Flagship Project**. The Project aims to jointly with government, civil society and industry shape and implement a process to develop, formulate and promote a National Compact (voluntary pledge) with the media and creative industries for a positive portrayal of gender relations and against gender violence. The Media Compact Flagship Project will provide a platform for media and related stakeholders to self-examine, explore and reconstruct their role in shaping societies' gender norms positively and facilitate dialogue to improve cooperation between the media and private, public and civil society actors with the common goal of achieving gender equality, women's empowerment and the end of gender-based violence.

As part of this initiative and to kick-start and facilitate a national, sector-wide dialogue the NGO Gender Links undertook extensive research on current dynamics of gender representation, stereotyping and the portrayal of gender-based violence in South African television space.

The key findings reflect the unequal gender dynamics at play within broader society. Gender stereo-types are still prevalent, women's voices are heard less and decision making still lies with men. Women compromise 77% of programme creators but just 15% of directors in entertainment, broadly, content creation remains a "man's world". A concern from a prevention perspective is the finding that in the breakdown of topic categories prevention constitutes only 5% of GBV topic coverage in the news and 29% in children's programming. This demonstrates that the focus on news values often means that news media waits for a violent incident to occur and cover it rather than to shed light on underlying causes and drivers. There needs to be a sector wide focus on how to improve ways of reporting on preventative interventions and methods. The reactionary approach of the industry stakeholders requires unpacking and interrogation.

Of course, all media stakeholders also operate within the wider socio-economic climate in South African society, where patriarchy, sexism and structural violence against women are almost a norm. The media and creative industries operate within these circumstances and are not exempt from these norms. At the same time, there is a recognition of the power the media and creative sector has to influence and shape norms and perceptions within society. Thus, journalists and creatives always have to balance the need to reflect society with the need to challenge it. We believe the right balance can only be identified through an on-going inclusive discourse, constantly interrogating and evaluating the own behavior and its impact.

Global movements like **#metoo** and local movements such as **#totalshutdown** have moved the goal post in terms of how society understands GBV and gender stereotypes in media and creative industry. Past notions of how to report on GBV and represent women are now being challenged and negotiated. The GIZ-PfP and UN Women Media Compact Flagship Project sets out to support the facilitation of this negotiation and at the same time improve cooperation between public, private and civil society actors.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

GL Chief Executive Officer Colleen Lowe Morna provided strategic guidance and oversight of the research and edited the report. GL Media and Communications Manager, Tarisai Nyamweda led the research team responsible for data gathering, analysis, and collection of qualitative case studies. She co-authored the report with GL Services Manager, Mukayi Makaya Magarangoma, who also coordinated all liaison with GIZ-PfP and UN Women. GL Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor Monica Bandeira designed the data capturing tools and Google data reports. GL Monitoring and Evaluation Manager, Fanuel Hadzizi created the graphs for the report.

We are grateful to the media monitors: Madikana Matjila, Susan Mogari, Patricia Mahachi, Sakhile Dube, Mpho Pitsi, Faith Zaba, Paddy Ngonyama, Tafwakose Jenda, Sandiswa Manana and Mauwane Raophala. A special thanks goes to the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF) for providing a group of interns including Aobakwe Kgwele, Bessie Malatji and Sentle Hlatshwayo who curated the case studies and video clips for the case studies and coordinated focus groups. Also part of the editing team and focus groups was Alexandra Maggs a Master student from the University of Witwatersrand.

We are deeply indebted to the Advisory Group of the Media Compact Flagship Project who guided the process: The Department of Arts and Culture, The Department of Communication, The Government Communication and Information System (GCIS), The National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF), The Film and Publications Board, The KwaZulu-Natal Film Commission, The SABC and The SABC Foundation, MultiChoice / Mnet, The South African Screen Federation and their member organisaitons, The South African National Editors Forum (SANEF), Soul City Institute for Social Justice, Sisters Working in Film and Television, Sonke Gender Justice.

Sincere thanks to the content producers (**Annex C**) and the focus group (**Annex D**) for their invaluable insights.

ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
DA	Democratic Alliance
DoPs	Directors of Photography
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GCIS	Government Communication and Information Systems
GEM	Classification Gender and Media Classification
GIZ	German Development Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit)
GL	Gender Links
GMMP	Global Media Monitoring Project
GMPS	Gender and Media Progress Study
GNC	Gender Non-Confirming
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Viruses
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
NFVF	National Film and Video Foundation
OCEAN	Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism
PfP	GIZ - Partnership for Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls in Southern Africa Programme
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAGA	South Africa Guild of Actors
SANEF	South African National Editors Forum
SOGI	Sexual Orientation and Gender Identities
ToR	Terms of Reference
TV	Television
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"When men or women turn to or on the media, yet fail to see women in our true diversity, there is a sense that all or some women literally don't count. It's crucial that the media report and reflect, not conceal and distort."[1] - Gloria Steinman (American feminist, journalist, and social political activist).

There is urgent need to achieve greater diversity, balance and sensitivity in the coverage of gender violence in South African television. This is the key finding of the first ever gender monitoring of the audio visual media to include entertainment and children's programming, in addition to the news, that has been the subject of much greater scrutiny over the years.

Gender Links (GL), a Southern African women's rights organisation that promotes gender equality in and through the media, undertook the study from 25 November 2018 to 31 January 2019. The study covers three distinct periods: the Sixteen Days of Activism from 25 November (International Day of No Violence Against Women) to 10 December (Human Rights Day); the festive period (Christmas and New Year), and the post festive period from mid to end January. Overall, monitors around the country viewed and analysed 1462 news reports, children and adult TV episodes from 24 programmes on 13 channels. This amounted to just under 600 hours of TV air time.

The research (see key data at **Annex A**) found that:

- ***Women are still the missing voices in the news:*** Overall, women constitute 39% of TV news sources; an improvement on the 25% recorded in the 2015 Gender and Media Progress Study (GMPS) conducted by GL, but still eleven percentage points short of gender parity.

- ***Women's voices peter out after the Sixteen Days and festive season:*** While the proportion of women characters remained constant across the three periods monitored in entertainment and children's programming, in the news the proportion of women dropped from 40% during the Sixteen Days to 33% during the post festive season. Qualitative monitoring found that the most in-depth and direct reporting on Gender Based Violence (GBV), including an extended interview with UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka took place during the Sixteen Days. This coverage wanes as the year progresses.

- ***Women are better represented in entertainment and children's programming, but not as voice overs:*** At 48%, women are better represented as characters in entertainment than as subjects in the news. Girls and women comprise 61% of the characters in children's programming, but only 40% of the voice overs.

- ***Diversity targets on race are close to being achieved:*** The 2011 census figures show blacks at 76.4%, whites at 9.1%, mixed race, Asian and other at 11.5% of South Africa's population.[2] At 71% for blacks, 13% for whites, and 11% for persons of mixed race, Asian and other, TV news comes close to reflecting the demographics of South Africa. In entertainment, 87% of the characters monitored were black, 9% white and 4% of mixed race or other.

- ***Older women disappear, especially in the news:*** There is a marked decline in women's representation in TV as they grow older. In TV news, girls comprise 65% of children and 52% of teenagers. Women in the age group 20 to 35 comprise 66% of subjects. But women aged 35 to 50 dip to just 36% of the total, and women over the age of 50 to just 16% of the total. This trend is also reflected in entertainment where women aged 35 to 50 and 50+ comprise 44% and 36% of those featured.

- ***Women are portrayed in a more diverse set of roles in entertainment and children's programmes than in the news:*** The function of sources/ characters concerns the role of these sources/ characters, including whether they are spokespersons; subjects; experts; first- hand accounts; eye witness or popular opinion. In children's programming female characters predominate in all categories, and in entertainment there is a 40:60 split or vice versa in almost every category. Yet in news, women sources are grossly under-represented as experts (9%) and first- hand accounts; eye witness and popular opinion categories (just 2% each).

1 https://www.womensmediacenter.com/about/press/press-releases/womens-media-center-report-women-journalists-report-less-news-than-men-tv-g

2 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_groups_in_South_Africa, accessed 4 April, 2019

- ***Topics covered vary, with diversity as a topic low on the agenda:*** Economy, sports and politics dominating the news agenda more so than in entertainment and children's programming. Crime and violence (21%) is higher in entertainment than in news (14%) and much higher than in in children's programming (4%). Of concern is that gender equality as a topic constitutes just 1% news; 3% of entertainment and 1% of children's programming. GBV as a topic is 2% of news, 4% of entertainment and 2% of children's programming. Sexual orientation as a topic only featured in entertainment (3%) and disability only in children's programming (2%).
- ***Women's views and voices are scarce in mainstream topics:*** Men's views dominate in the politics, economics and social topic categories of TV news. Women's views are only equally heard in the gender equality topic category. In entertainment, women's views are hardly heard in any of the mainstream topic categories and comprise 37% of the gender equality topic category.
- ***Women are heard more than men on GBV in the news, but not entertainment:*** Women comprise 67% of sources in TV news on GBV, but only 34% of the voices on this subject in entertainment.
- ***Stories on where to get support are still sparse, except in children's programming:*** Only 16% of TV news stories on GBV mentioned where to go for help. On the other hand, 67% of children's stories on GBV mentioned where to go for help. This reflects greater concern with help and support for children compared to women.
- ***There is very little focus on prevention:*** The breakdown of GBV topic categories shows that prevention constitutes 5% of GBV coverage in the news and 29% in children's programming. This is of concern, considering the potential powerful role of TV in spearheading prevention campaigns.
- ***Still strong elements of gender stereotyping, especially in entertainment:*** The study found one third or more of the items monitored to be gender aware and the rest either gender blind or conveying subtle or blatant gender stereotypes. Only 2% of news and 7% of children's coverage fell in the blatant stereotype category, compared to 16% for entertainment. This is of concern given the powerful role of TV entertainment in shaping societal norms.
- ***Men dominate content decision-making:*** With women comprising 77% of programme creators but just 31% of executive directors and 15% of directors in entertainment, content creation remains a "man's world."