

# Gender and Media Campaigns

## Women face discrimination from the men

**DUMISANI RECOMBO**

LONG before anyone had heard of HIV/AIDS, women and girls faced discrimination and oppression based on gender. HIV and AIDS merely exacerbated the inequalities in Southern Africa. While an analysis of gender often focuses on women, rigid gender roles affect the health of both men and women. There are long-standing socio-cultural factors that make women and girls in Southern Africa more vulnerable to HIV. Although there have been some positive changes, women are usually less educated and, by extension, less economically independent than men, and disproportionately saddled with household work. Moreover, in most Southern African countries, the lack of good legal structures, or their poor implementation, allows discrimination against women. The question of unequal gender relations is one of the most serious factors that fuels the pandemic. For example, many women are not able to negotiate safer sex or make overall decisions about their reproductive health.

sent to the nation and there are few positive men as role models. By not teaching men to reform such behaviour, or not including them in projects, our efforts to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS will not work. In South Africa, research shows that HIV/AIDS messages have reached more than 80% of the population. Yet, why do we still have the highest number of new infections? Why do we have high rates of stigma and gender-based violence, and little behavioural change? In Uganda, the central message for the nation was "to multiply sexual partners, including casual sex. South Africa sends out messages that portray HIV as both life-threatening and filled with hope. Different kinds of messages can cause confusion, particularly when people are struggling to identify their own gender roles. SERAJI hand recently launched a centralised HIV messaging campaign that talks about the need for life and the other about being faithful to one partner. I believe this will yield a positive response from the nation. *— Jacob Zuma, South*

## Demand safe sex: First Lady

**By Vicki Mingo**

Lesotho First Lady Mmusesa Mmusesa is encouraging women to demand safer sex from their partners, and equating it to, "Meat is not the centre of the world." Mmusesa said the statement at the launch of the F22 male condom campaign at the Lesotho City Stadium on 29 November. "Negotiating for safer sex is a term that has become accepted world-wide, yet, to pass a woman of the country of a man," Mmusesa said the gender reveal. "It is not before that a woman should negotiate for safer sex, but beyond that."



Sharon Philo giving a demonstration on how to use female condoms.

Mmusesa added that safer sex is achievable if women and men themselves take up the challenge. Mmusesa's statement points to how important women's empowerment and gender equality is to reducing the existing impact of women living with HIV. With World AIDS Day just one month away, the new product is a welcome addition to the arsenal in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Mmusesa is the first lady in the Southern African region to be the first lady to speak at the launch of the F22 male condom campaign. The World Health Organization estimated that in Lesotho 7% of people aged 15-49 years old were living with HIV or AIDS. Of those million adults, 7% were women. Young women aged 15-19 are around six times more likely to be living with HIV than are males of the same age. One of the reasons for greater vulnerability is a gender inequality. Women disproportionately bear the burden of poverty and continue to be victims of violence and forced sexual intercourse in the streets of the city. They do not have primary agency of child welfare and put their lives at risk every time they become pregnant. Women also play an independent role in the negotiation of sexual practices, economic development, and education. They have the right to give as much as men from the benefits brought by globalization. If not addressed, HIV/AIDS will make a new battle for women to play their role in the development of the country.



Lesotho First Lady Mmusesa Mmusesa distributes female condoms in Lesotho recently.

The first lady took time to hand out five samples of the condom and talk to the young adults about the need of quality condoms, to replace the inferior quality of using generic condom during sex. The female condom is an example in the country, and the region as a whole, to improve local individuals and become a strong protection of women. "The first lady must be remembered for the job well done, it is the first to happen in Lesotho where the first lady goes to meet with women from the densely populated areas and launch the condom hand-out, women need modern life," and one of the recipients of condoms at the launch. Women often have very limited opportunities to demand safer sex, due to unequal power relationships within relationships. Communication is rarely designed to be more user friendly, accessible and available to them. Developing

opment of effective strategies to empower women and address issues of gender inequality, as well as challenge gender roles that perpetuate violence to children. Unless governments and service providers address these gender inequality, it will be difficult for women to protect themselves, but First Lady Mmusesa Mmusesa points out, it is time for women demand the protection and equality that is their right. *— Vicki Mingo writes for the Daily Lesotho and is a member of the Centre for Media Southern Africa (CMSA) in The Gambia as part of the Gender Link and Commentary Service.*



## Making Every Voice Count: a Southern Africa Case Study

By Colleen Lowe Morna

### Abstract

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

### Key words

gender, media, activism

## Gender in the media

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

Some weeks later, at another gathering, the answer came to me more clearly than I could articulate it at the time. Why is it, I asked, that in relation to every other issue, South Africa wants to be measured by, and exceed, world standards? Yet when it comes to gender, we are happy to be counted with or below

the lowest common denominator! There is no other country, I said, that understands the pain of being silenced as intrinsically as South Africa. Why then can’t we take the lead where gender and the media are concerned?

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

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

## Context

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

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

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

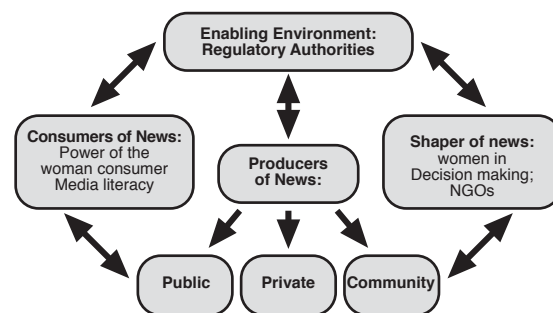
citizens participating in the building of their nation (Gender Links and Media Institute of Southern Africa 2003).

## Strategies for change

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

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

Figure 1: Approaches to gender and the media



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

## Activist research and networks

### *Gender and media summits*

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

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

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

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

#### *Mirror on the Media reports*

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

## **Audiences, consumers, and media literacy**

### *Audience Research*

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

### *Media Literacy*

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



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

## Policy

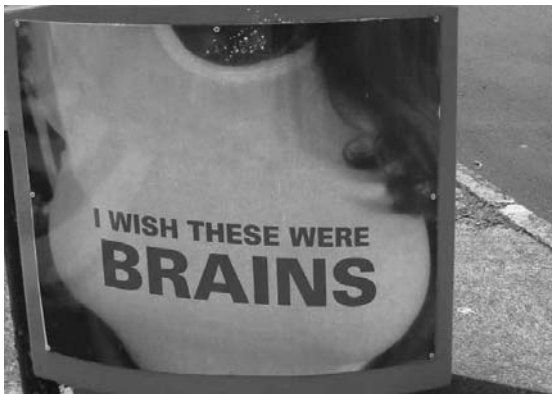
From the outset, GL has stressed that activism and research must be rooted in policy, to bring about sustained change. Policy changes need to be at both the national and the regional level, as well as within newsrooms themselves.

### *Media regulation bodies*

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

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

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



### *Working with media organisations to develop gender policies*

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

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

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

### *Media Action Plan*

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

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

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

### Training

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

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

In the longer term, there are no shortcuts to mainstreaming gender into entry-level media education.

Working with GL, the Polytechnic of Namibia undertook a three-year gender-mainstreaming project in which gender was integrated into every facet of the polytechnic's entry-level journalism courses, and tested in a student news agency set up for the 2005 elections in Namibia. The students' increased sensitivity to diversity resulted in high quality, issue-based coverage documented in a final evaluation. A primer on the process and outcomes is being used as a basis for work with a network of media trainers committed to integrating gender into their curricula (Lowe Morna and Shilongo 2004).

### Building bridges between gender activists and the media

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

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



Rhodes BU participants from left- Henrietta Banda, Palesa Mopedi and Theresa Hayward.

Credit: Trevor Davies

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

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

### **Making progress?**

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

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

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

An innovation in the 2005 Global Media Monitoring

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

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

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

### **Going forward**

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

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

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

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#### Writers Bio

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

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Former GL Chairperson Thenjiwe Mtintso, speaking at the launch of the organisation in 2001.

<sup>2</sup>The Global Media Monitoring Project is an ongoing study that documents the participation and portrayal of women and men in the world's news media, at five-yearly intervals. Studies have so far been carried out in 1995, 2000, and most recently in 2005 (Gallagher 2005). For more information, see [www.whomakesthenews.org/about\\_us/what\\_is\\_gmpp](http://www.whomakesthenews.org/about_us/what_is_gmpp) (last accessed June 2007).



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

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



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

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

#### Campaign Objectives

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

## Engaging with the Media

### *Commentaries and Supplements*

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

### *Alliance Members’ Skills Building*

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

### *Materials Production*

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

### Notes

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



## Media Activism and the 16 Days of Activism

By Loveness Jambaya Nyakujarah

### Abstract

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

### Key words

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

## Defining media activism

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

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

### Why media activism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## A warrior every day, not just for 16 days

**Comment**

**Jabulani Mamela**

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

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

The year was 1996. My mother was expecting another baby. She had been a virgin for 20 years. She had never been pregnant, because she observed "virginity" - that is the line I learned not even hear my brothers break. Our tales of daily heroic adventures would come to an abrupt halt.

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

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

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

It was awful. At that moment we

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

### Measuring impact

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

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

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

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

This shows that more and more people have access to information about the campaign with GCIS tracking the medium through which the citizens surveyed obtained their information. The majority of respondents heard or saw the campaign via mainstream media (TV,

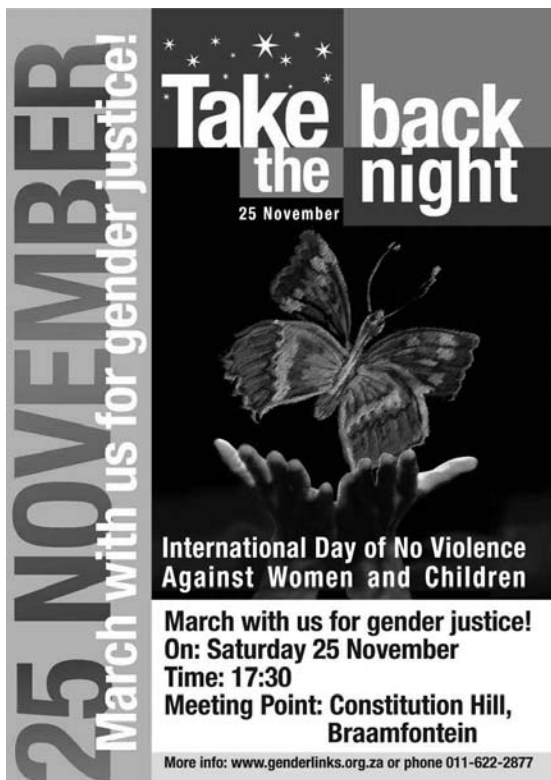
radio & newspapers). Television (81%) & radio stations (46%) are the most used media. These are followed by newspapers (18%) and the "word of mouth" (12%) from family members & friends. Least used are media were magazines, pamphlets, outdoor media, *imbizo*, etc (Between 1-2 %)

### How has this been achieved?

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

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

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



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

## Next steps

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

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### Writers Bio

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## The Power of the “I” Story

By Mariette van Dijk

### Abstract

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

### Key words

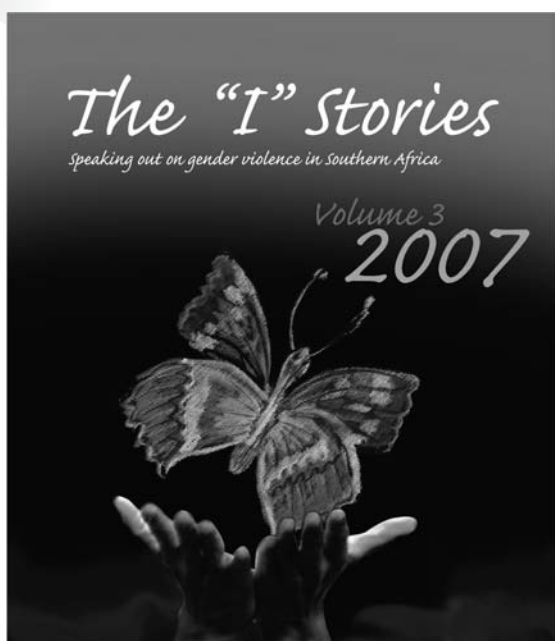
violence, Sixteen Days of Activism, media

## Introduction

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

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

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



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

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

who find themselves in abusive relationships to seek help.

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

*They will shock and upset you...  
But they will also give you hope.  
Hope that women in our region are speaking out. Hope that many years too late politicians have recognised that women's rights are human rights.  
Hope that our best bet in getting action taken is by breaking the silence."*  
- excerpted from the forward,  
"I" Stories 2006

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

I didn’t want to bother anybody else, so I separated myself from Makeba organisation and didn’t ask help from relatives. After the publication of the *I Stories* I was interviewed by a television show Masekuleme (Lets Talk) during the 16 Days Campaign. They filmed me from behind (anonymously) but a social worker from Makeba home recognised me. Miriam Makeba found out and asked me to come back, which was now 2 weeks ago. Now she wants me to publish my poems and stories. I have written many for instance about Mandela and Apartheid. She also asked me to write and compose Xhosa songs for her. She realised that I am talented, but due to the abuse I was locked, but now

she stimulates me to use my talents. It is frustrating when you know you are talented, but you can’t do anything.

Miriam Makeba never knew about the abusive relationship and felt guilty. Even relatives felt guilty, that I had gone to POWA shelter and not to them, but I didn’t want to bother anybody anymore. I gave Makeba my *I Story* and after she finished reading it she said to me: That is why I divorced 5 times, because I couldn’t stand it any longer.

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

The thing with abuse is that you get used to it and think everything is right. Even when others criticised my husband, I would still defend him and say he is like this, you will get used to him. I saw nothing wrong. Later he isolated me from my friends and family and locked me and the children in the house. My house became a prison. I want my friends and family to read my story and explanation.

When I distribute the “I” *Stories* book to them, it is not necessarily about my story, because all stories are effective. I am empowering my daughter and other women not to repeat my mistakes. When you are with your spouse and you read these stories you will be able to pinpoint some mistakes to your spouse. It is vital that your spouse must know your likes and dislikes. You mustn’t compromise. A yes must be a yes and no must be a no. That is another thing that kills us women, we keep on compromising. When they read these stories, women will be empowered.

When I read other stories, I compare them and think my story wasn’t as worse as theirs. I cried reading the other stories, they are too brutal, and thought I would not have allowed that to happen to me. But I realise if others read mine they might say the same. I keep on reading them, they never bore me.

Role models

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

Seloane decided to use her own name for her story. "I had no problem with that, because other women in my situation often don't know how they can help themselves. As long as they don't talk about it, they stay in the relationship for long, like I did, because they are not aware of it. Only at Nisaa I started thinking about my situation, while talking to the social workers. Since then I am no longer a victim, but survivor. I am strong now

and I know that I will never let anyone abuse me that way again. I also believe it is much better for my children that I left. I know they have seen the book and saw me on TV, but we never really talked about it." At the time she was in the abusive relationship, Seloane was not working and fully dependent on her husband. Now she is divorced and works as a senior personal officer at the Department of Justice.

Telling their story openly is not only empowering to the women themselves, but can have an impact on other women in their community. After Seloane's *I Story* was published, during the 16 Days of Activism, she appeared on radio and two television shows. When friends and colleagues told her they had seen her on TV, she would initially joke, saying "that wasn't me, but my sister." Soon women from her community would come to her house for help. Seloane recalls, "They explained about their abusive relationships, and that they didn't know where to go for help. They also wanted to leave and tell their story on radio or television, but didn't know how

to approach this. I would refer them to Gender Links or Nisaa. Therefore I believe the *"I" Stories* are powerful, because they open up the eyes of women, who before not always realised they were in an abusive relationship or did not know where to get help."

Media coverage and reaction

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

MARKING 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

NONO TINTELA

**H**E WAS perfect, he was my hero, my superior, my everything. I loved him. I thought nothing or no one could hurt me as long as my daddy was around. He loved me very much. I was his princess. If anyone hit me, I would just keep quiet until he came home, and then I would start crying. He would throw dangerous things at the person who hit me. At the time, I didn't know that my father was abusive. I thought he was just protecting me.

When I was 9 years old, we were playing house with my friends when an older man (a friend of my brother's) raped me. He told me not to cry or make a noise. At the time I did not know what was happening to me. I felt so afraid and guilty. When I took a bath that night, my mother noticed the blood on my panties. She asked me to open my legs and checked me, but then said nothing.

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

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

**Hate**

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

I didn't know this man any more. I wanted my father back. I so wanted the school holidays to be over because I could not stay in that house any more. My younger sister would sit in the corner and cry when my older brother and I called the police. When the police left, my father started beating and



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

Scarred by a childhood fantasy

swearing at us. I wanted my father back. I wanted my hero back because there was no one to protect me from this monster. My older brother told my mother that if she did not move out of the house, he would kill my father. I was devastated because I loved my father so much. My mother moved out with me and my younger sister. When they divorced, I felt apart. I hated my father so much that when he died, I did not go to his funeral.

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

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

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

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

I met my husband about 90 years after I had my first child. At the time he did not know about the child. He was so sweet and loving, he reminded me of my father.

At first, I thought he was protective of me because he loved me just like my dad. I did not see the signs. I think I missed my

father so much that I did not notice the signs. It was as though my hero had come back to life again. He told me that he loved me just as my father did. I needed to hear that. I always felt safe in his arms and inside me. I felt my father's love. Then he started beating me and all the anger inside me started to surface. My daughter was 9 months old when the abuse started.

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

The three court interdicts

081-332-3332 Crime Stop 086-081-0111  
 086-081-0111  
 086-081-0111

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

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

**Anger**

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

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

I am angry at our justice system for not protecting women and children. I am angry at our courts for releasing these monsters back to our homes. I am angry at the man who raped me as a child and now walks the streets as a respected politician. I am angry at the man who made me pregnant and then walked away, leaving me so angry towards my first daughter (now 30 years old) with whom I have never bonded.

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Maleshoane Motsiri

According to Mc Cousen,

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

them came from the "I" Stories. It was absolutely brilliant. I have won 6 awards in total, all were for my coverage on gender based violence.



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

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

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

### Readers and listeners respond

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

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



Meleshoane Motsiri

Credit: Colleen Lowe Morna

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

Gender Links also occasionally receives requests from people or other NGO's who want to buy the *"I" Stories* book for a resource or redistribution. For instance,

Maureen Shabonga, from Khaya Lethemba shelter in Braamfontein, bought twenty copies to give to staff and clients at the shelter, after a woman in her shelter who participated in the *"I" Stories* in 2007 had shown her the book.

According to Shabonga,

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

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

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

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**I survived abuse and started a new life.** 27 November 2007

*Finding strength is not easy. Puni Matsimbi shares her painful story.*

*In memory of my son Mawabo (1988-09-07 to 2006-03-12)*

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

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

**From man to monster**

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

Article: **Puni Matsimbi** Gender Links  
Image:

Be a **FLU FIGHTER!** Need more info on Flu and Flu vaccinations? Click here...  
MELICKS

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

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

You have nothing to fear but fear itself. his anger at you is a result of his being insecure and a coward. he can't take his frustration out on anyone else so he is using you. leave him and when he tries to woo you back with empty promises be wary of him and finally have faith in the almighty and hope for the best. you have to take the first step. my prayers and tears are with you.

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

#### Writer Bio

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## Popular Media Aims to Combat Human Trafficking

By Tonya Graham

### Abstract

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

### Key words

human trafficking, rights, migration

## Human Trafficking in Southern Africa

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

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) is one such organisation, and its Southern African Counter-Trafficking Assistance Programme (SACTAP), which commenced in 2003, is a key player in Southern Africa's efforts to tackle and respond to human trafficking. Active across the Southern African region, SACTAP aims to support and develop the capacity of governments and

civil society groups to deal with the problem of trafficking in Southern Africa while also offering assistance to victims and raising awareness among the general public.

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

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

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

Lack of awareness remains an obstacle in the fight against human trafficking. For many organisations like the IOM that are working to end human trafficking, this means arming people who may want to migrate with as much information about trafficking as they can, in the hope

that they will be better able to recognise false offers and migrate more safely, thereby decreasing the number of people who are trafficked each year.

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



**HUMAN TRAFFICKING IS SLAVERY**  
Every year thousands of men, women and children are being trafficked into South Africa and sold into forced labour or prostitution.

Victims of trafficking are people who are forced to work as slaves in foreign countries. They accept attractive job offers abroad without knowing that these offers are false. They are forced into prostitution or labour with little or no pay to make money for their traffickers. They may be violently abused and made to repay large sums of money to their traffickers. Their passports may be taken away. They cannot escape. If you think you might be a victim of trafficking or know someone else who might be, you can ask for help - call IOM's Human Trafficking Help Line:

**0800-555-999**

IOM | SACTAP  
Southern African Coastal Trafficking Assistance Program

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

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

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

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

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

### **Drama to combat trafficking**

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

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

Communication strategies using drama also draw on participatory theatre and popular education models developed by Augusto Boal and Paulo Freire. By giving people the opportunity to consider behaviours or actions via fictional characters, it allows them to rehearse the behaviour or action in a safe, non-threatening environment giving them the confidence to enact that behaviour or action in the real world. In Boal's participatory theatre model, audiences literally become "spectactors,"

first watching, then acting out possible solutions for a common problem, or dealing with difficult situations by trying new behaviours (Boal 1979).

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

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

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

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

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



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

### **Khuluma Afrika!**

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

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

Workshopped over a two-month period by the Alertas da Vida group, *Khuluma Afrika!* told the story of two sisters, drawn to South Africa by false promises of a better life. Separated, desperate and exploited, the sisters seek

solace in letters to one another that express their hardships, hopes and dreams of home.

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

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

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



Community performance of *Khuluma Afrika!* at Blyvoor Informal Settlement.

*Credit: Tonya Graham*

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

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

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

Another advantage of theatre is that it is largely a non-

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

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

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

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



Sifiso Simelane and Rogerio Simango, performance at Elsburg Hostel, PlaserDome.

Credit: Deborah Walter

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

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

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

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

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

- Actor

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

- Audience member, inner-city drop in centre

*"No matter where you come from we still all the same."*

*"Discrimination isn't the way."*

- Audience member, inner-city bar

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Dealers/ Troco

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

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

- Zambian focus group participant

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

There are a wide range of benefits to using radio. It is low cost to produce relative to other mass media like television or film. Since it does not rely on literacy, a wide range of the population can access it. It allows for localisation of the issue, since information about local organisations, interviews with local individuals, etc can follow the drama. Also, community radio in itself is

largely participatory, and this can help draw listening communities into the issue. In rural areas especially, listening to the radio is often a family, group or community activity, and radio can make use of these existing listening groups to spark discussion and debate.



Anastácia da Glória Daúde Nhaca (Sofia) and Justina Oalmira Tihos Sigulha (Esperanca) recording Troco in Mozambique

Credit: Gabriel Fossatti-Bellani

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

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

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

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

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

- Zambian focus group participant

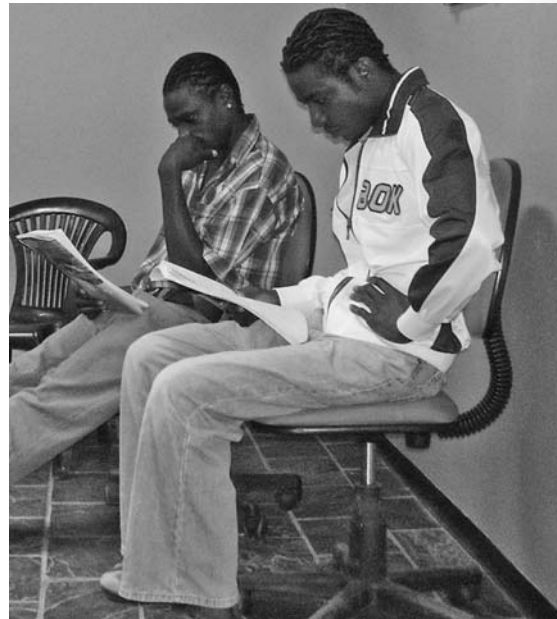
*"The script sounds like what happens on a daily basis."*

- Mozambican focus group participant

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

- Zambian voice actor

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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#### Writers Bio

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



## Media Activism: Opportunities for Rural Women

By Saeanna Chingamuka

### Abstract

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

### Key words

media activism, rural women, women's empowerment

## Introduction

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report of 2001 noted that "development, as often stated, is about expanding choices people have to lead lives they value and fundamental to enlarging choices is building human

capabilities –both of men and women across the social and economic spectrum of a society" (Balakrishnan 2002). This assertion acknowledges the importance of recognising the value that women can add to the development of their countries. As such, it is important to expand the knowledge among rural women in particular, enhancing their abilities to negotiate for their

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

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

### Where are rural women?

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



Women's access to media can lead to empowerment

*Credit: Trevor Davies*

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

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

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

### Regional concerns... where are rural women's voices?

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



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

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

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

### What has been happening?

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

communities by facilitating access to media, as well as encouraging media to engage with issues affecting this often unheard community.

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

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



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

*Credit: Daniel Walter*

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

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

The World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC) Africa continues to promote broadcasting that

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

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

## Conclusion

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

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

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

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#### Writers Bio

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

By Dr. Eno Akpabio and Patience Mathambo



### Abstract

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

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### Key words

media, domestic violence, family, relationships

## Introduction

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

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

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

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



Domestic violence features prominently in the news, clipping from *The Voice*.

growing concern in the Botswana society, the necessary awareness and publicity that should bring about a change would occur. This is because the agenda-setting hypothesis is played out fully when “a topic is both potentially interesting to an audience *and* receives the attention of the mass media” (Williams 1989).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Methodology

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

## Findings

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Botswana Guardian* distributed as follows:

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

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

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

In 2004, men continued to dominate news reports in *The Voice* and *Botswana Guardian* newspaper in regards to inflicting harm on their wives and girlfriends, rivalled

only in this year as reported by *The Voice* by parents' violence against children (35.5% each). Violence perpetrated by women against men accounted for 13%.

Violence by siblings and those emanating from divorce proceedings as well by children against parents accounted for 3.2% each. Follow up stories on domestic violence earlier reported by the newspaper accounted for 6.5%. Similarly, *Botswana Guardian* newspaper reports in regards to men inflicting harm

on their wives and girlfriends was an alarming 48%. Violence by men against men followed with 21.7% and violence on children by parents and follow-up stories accounted for 13% each. Violence perpetrated by family members on women was least with 4.3% (see table 4).

**Table 4**  
**Breakdown of domestic violence stories in The Voice and Botswana Guardian newspapers (2004)**

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

In 2005, *The Voice* recorded 37 domestic violence stories, the highest being violence by men against women with 46%. Follow-up stories were the next in line with 16.2%, followed closely by violence perpetrated by children against parents with 10.8%. The percentage of violence of family against men, siblings and men against men were 5.4% each. The least was violence by women against men, which accounted for 2.7%. The breakdown for 2005 for *Botswana Guardian* shows that violence

perpetrated by men against women remained high (36.2%). While on the other hand violence by parents against children and violence by men on men accounted for 17% each. Violence by women against men followed at 8.5%. The follow-up stories that were recorded were 6.4% and violence of family against men was also the same percentage. Violence of children against parents constituted 4.3% and violence by siblings accounted to 4.3% (see table 5).

**Table 5**  
**Breakdown of domestic violence stories in The Voice and Botswana Guardian newspapers (2005)**

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



In 2006 there were 54 domestic violence stories in *The Voice*; the highest being violence by men against women (53.7%). Violence by parents against children was the next in line with 14.8% followed by violence by men against men and women against women both with 7.4%. Violence by children against parents was 5.5%. The percentage of violence of family against men and women accounted for 3.7% each. The least were violence amongst siblings and follow-up stories with

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

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

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

### Discussion of findings

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

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

#### 1. Violence by men against women

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

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

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

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

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

### 2. Violence by parents against children

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

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

doctor in the belief that his cattle would multiply<sup>14</sup>.

Articles in the *Botswana Guardian* also indicate that men are not the only perpetrators of this form of violence; women also played a role in this ignoble form of abuse.

A case in which police found a baby dumped underneath a Motopi tree in Selebi Phikwe by the mother suggests that she wanted the baby to die<sup>15</sup>. Another newly born baby was found in a bush at Area W in Francistown. The baby, who is alleged to have been crying loudly, was found by people passing near the area<sup>16</sup>. The baby was still alive and taken to the hospital.

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

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

### 3. Violence by women against men

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

### 4. Children's violence against parents

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

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

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

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

##### 5. Other forms of domestic violence

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

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

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

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

##### Conclusion

While it is true that newspapers record history in a hurry, it is clear that the issue of domestic violence is a problem in Botswana as it is in most other parts of the world. The good thing though is that *The Voice* and the

*Botswana Guardian* newspapers have devoted a lot of attention/space to this phenomenon. One of the reasons why the problem has developed horns and hoofs is the cover-up associated with the malaise. People want to give the impression that their homes and marriages are heaven on earth when so much abuse is going on behind closed doors. Highlighting the problem is a first step to solving it.

Much good comes from newspapers' reports on domestic violence as this brings the issue forcefully into the public domain. Moreover, it is gratifying to note that in a number of instances, in both papers, the law enforcement agents responded in a timely manner to these incidences.

In fact, a number of the reports were either sourced from court proceedings or attributed to the police. Publicising such attempts at enforcing one's rights should embolden other victims of abuse to come forward and get perpetrators punished.

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

While it is true that the media cannot correctly reflect society in its entirety, as they seem to pander to the sensational, the number of reports and the forms of violence within this five-year period is a cause for concern.

This is because there would be more cases of abuse than are reported to the authorities or make it to the pages of newspapers. It is worth repeating that the case of Botswana is a shining example of how these matters ought to be treated. Many in Africa endure hell in their households and relationships and refuse to report such abuses. Such posture has to do with the belief, albeit erroneous, that it is ok for a man to beat his wife. Reports of such beatings brought to the attention of in-laws are often papered over as normal.

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

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

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