



Media Watch



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Gender and Tabloids in Southern Africa

Edited by Colleen Lowe Morna and Sikhonzile Ndlovu



Abstract

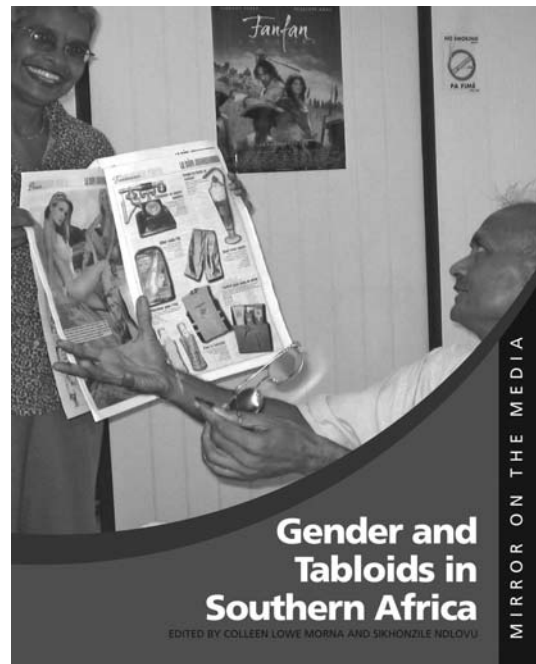
As part of the Mirror on the Media series of monitoring reports coordinated by Gender Links with the support of the Open Society Initiative of Southern Africa (OSISA) on gender and the media, *Gender and Tabloids in Southern Africa* explores the growing phenomena of tabloid media in the Southern African region. The findings indicate that when it comes to gender, women continue to be unheard voices, especially when it comes to “hard news.”

Key words

tabloids, media, gender

The study focused on gender and tabloids in three Southern African countries with the highest density of tabloids, defined in terms of both size and content. It included monitoring of three newspapers in each country over the month of June 2007. The monitoring covered a total of 2546 news items: 859 in Mauritius; 1203 in South Africa and 484 in Tanzania (where tabloids are much fewer pages than in the other countries). Researchers also conducted desktop research, interviewed editors, gathered case material and administered an audience survey to 280 readers in the three countries.

This research focused on gender representation and portrayal in tabloids and audience responses to this. This is the first time that GL and GEMSA have conducted research on tabloids. To our knowledge, it is the first comprehensive study on gender and tabloids in Southern Africa.



Tabloids have been an important focus of current media debates. Most of these debates have focused on tabloids in relation to journalistic standards, media ethics, and the related tabloidisation of the media [IAJ (2006) Strelitz & Steenveld (2005); Joseph (2005a & 2005b); Berger (2005)]. Limited research exists on gender portrayal in tabloids. It is thus appropriate to evaluate not only the reasons behind the popularity of this medium but also how women (in particular) are able to access tabloids, how women and men are portrayed, and how they respond to this form of media.

Origin of tabloids

The word "tabloid" itself is a derivation from "tablette," an old French word for "small slab... with or for inscription" (Langer 1998). There are a number of serious newspapers with serious, hard-news content of high journalistic standards in tabloid form (i.e. *Mail and Guardian* in South African and the *Daily Mail* in London).

However, the modern day understanding of tabloids is most closely aligned to the British tabloids, renowned for their emphasis on scandal, particularly as it relates to politicians and other personalities (sports or entertainment), and recipe of "news" evidently popular with the "masses," i.e. the working class majority. The distinctions are felt in terms of readership where the mainstream press is seen as more *highbrow* and its readers distinguished (from *low brow*, popular culture that is). There are not always clear differences between tabloid and mainstream media. This is primarily due to the characteristics of tabloids becoming increasingly evident in the mainstream media. Tabloidisation of media is a phrase generally used to explain the growing trend of mainstream media reflecting the character of tabloid-style journalism. This has resulted in the terms "tabloid" and "tabloidisation" being (erroneously) conflated, although they are distinct categories.

The tabloidisation of the mainstream media in South Africa for example, is evident in the blurring of boundaries between the more established daily, the *Sowetan*, and the newer *Daily Sun*. The former is a traditional mainstream paper in tabloid format and the latter a tabloid (in content and form). The shift, it is argued, is

partially due to "the bottom line," where the uptake of the *Daily Sun* encroached on the *Sowetan's* market, thus necessitating a review of strategy in securing readers.

For the purposes of this research, tabloids are defined both in terms of **form** and **content**. The following characteristics broadly define the kind of newspapers that constitute the focus of this research.

"Tabloid" refers to:

- A type of news characterised as "extravagant, sensationalistic, over dramatic and focused almost entirely on a human interest angle" (ibid.).
- Media that contains news in a condensed form and much photographic material, and that features stories of violence, crime, or scandal presented in a breathtaking style (<http://www.radessays.com/viewpaper/45781/Motzart.html>).

In a nutshell, tabloids are newspapers focusing on scandal, gossip, entertainment and sport. It is a press that is characterised by sensationalism. Their use of photographs and colour add to the visual appeal, and the language (basic address) of tabloids adds to the popularity of both the form and content. For convenience, the non-tabloid press is referred to in the research as the "mainstream media."



Johannesburg news stand

Credit: Brendan Kennedy

The African context

Measured against the above definition, the African media landscape has seen a proliferation of tabloid journalism over the past few years. In South Africa, newspaper readership trends show a steady growth in favour of tabloids (AMPS 2005). Together the *Daily Sun*, *Sunday Sun*, *Sowetan*, *Son* and *Sunday World* command the biggest share of total readership (that's 11.2%; 6.3%; 5.3%; 4.5% and 3.4% respectively).

According to an article on Tanzanian media by Lawrence Kilimwiko, not a day goes by in Tanzania without sensational headlines about death splashed across the front page of its tabloid newspapers¹. Kilimwiko suggests that colour photographs of grisly accidents or violent crimes feature most prominently.

Very little empirical research exists on in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, but a cursory desktop review conducted for this research in ten Southern African countries showed that out of a total of 178 publications, 37 (or 20 %) are regarded by media analysts in those countries as tabloid both in form and content as defined earlier.

Making media accessible or destroying journalism?

In South Africa, tabloids have been the subject of an ongoing debate in media-related publications, specifically *Equid Novi*, the *Media* magazine, the *Rhodes Journalism Review* [Wasserman (2005); Strelitz & Steenveld (2005); Joseph (2005a & 2005b); Berger (2005)]. Arguments have focused primarily on tabloids in relation to journalistic standards, media ethics, and the related tabloidisation of the media. Similar debates are emerging in other countries as the tabloid phenomenon takes root. These debates have essentially focused on whether or not tabloids are "good journalism" or good for journalism. This is situated within the ambit of ongoing dialogue about journalistic standards and standards of journalism.

Unlike tabloids, mainstream media – it is argued - present objective facts, and are meant to reflect and interrogate

the political and socio-economic realities of societies. Moreover, as Lynette Steenveld (2006, 20) argues, the address of mainstream press is more authoritative than tabloids (which are conversational): "[t]heirs is serious, official, and impersonal, aimed at producing understanding and belief" [...] "they address their readers from the position of one who knows, and is providing information for those who don't."

Argument in support of tabloids often focuses on a form of journalism, which talks to the needs of "ordinary" people and which profiles the realities of working class people in particular. It is argued that tabloids focus more on people than the state. As Bird (1998) argues, the growth of the tabloids and the tabloidisation of the media points to the audience preference for "human interest stories, celebrity gossip and life-style advice". This observation concurs with findings of the recent Gender and Media Audience Study (2005) conducted across 12 countries, which found that women and men would like more local and human-interest news (Lowe Morna, Rama and Muriungi, 2006, 19).

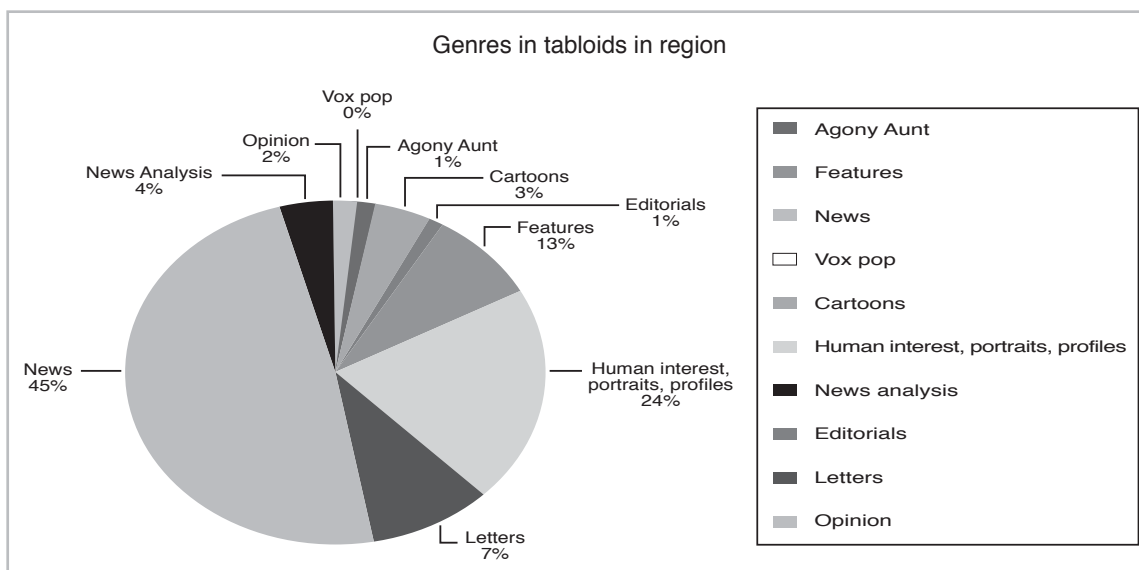
Tabloids, it is argued, contribute to public dialogue and debate, which in post apartheid South Africa as well as emerging multi party democracies in the region reflect a move away from the historical marginalisation of the country's majority and the preserve of the public sphere for the ruling minority and elites. On the other hand, arguments against tabloids highlight the ways in which tabloids often violate the basic ethics of journalism including objectivity, investigation, facts and the "pursuit of the truth."

Findings

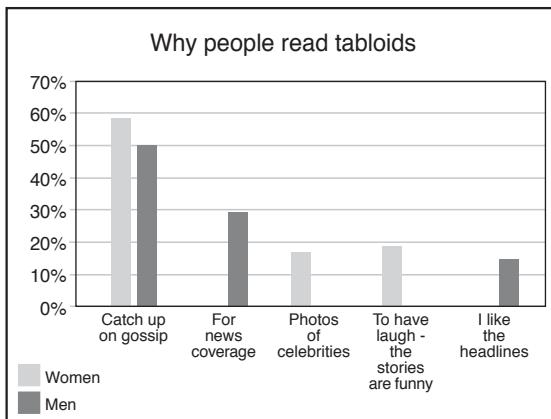
Regardless of the different arguments for and against tabloids, one sure fact is that they are a growing part of the media landscape. As such, understanding their reach, scope, and content is part of understanding the regional media landscape. The research pointed to the following findings.

- *The tabloid phenomenon is mushrooming across Southern Africa:* Out of 178 newspapers in ten countries, 37 (or 20 %) are regarded by media analysts in those countries as tabloid both in form

- and content. These are characterised by sensation with stories are told in a melodramatic and breathless tone. Stories about superstitious incidents are often reported as fact, with little or no verification.
- *The main target is lower wage earners:* In all countries tabloids target the working and lower middle class and in South Africa the main target is black readers. The research showed that the majority of tabloid readers have a secondary school education, although in Mauritius quite a high proportion have a tertiary school education.
 - *Men are the main buyers of tabloids:* Although tabloid editors claim to be targeting women, the research shows that they are not the primary buyers of tabloids. Only 43% women buy the paper directly compared to 62% of men. Women are more likely than men to get the paper from a spouse, other family member, friend or neighbour.
 - *Tabloids make use of more images than mainstream media.* Images make up 21% of content in tabloids while images take up only 15% of space in mainstream papers. Advertising takes up 35% of space in tabloids compared to 44% in mainstream media.
 - *Most editorial content in tabloids is of a non-news nature.* News constitutes only 45% of the editorial package (except in Mauritius, where the figure is 60%). The balance comprises human interest stories, features and other genres.
 - *Audiences like interactive aspects of tabloids:* The favourite genres for women are the agony aunts and human interest profiles and portraits, and news and articles that ask for feedback. The favourite genres for men are articles that ask for feedback, news and editorials. The fact that both women and men responded so positively to “articles in which people are asked what they think about something” suggests that there is more scope for interactive features in tabloids.
 - *Sports and celebrity news dominate:* Both tabloids and mainstream media share a love of sports (21 % of all topics in this research and 17 % in the Gender and Media Baseline Study). On the other hand, mainstream media has a much higher proportion of economic and political news (25 % compared to 10 % in the case of tabloids). Tabloids in turn have a much higher proportion of media, entertainment and celebrity news (24 % in tabloids compared to 8 % in mainstream media).
 - *Gender hardly features as a topic:* At about one % each, gender violence and gender equality are equally marginal topics in both tabloids and the mainstream media.
 - *Community concerns are not well covered:* Despite the claim by editors that tabloids are like a service arm to communities, the majority of both women and men felt that tabloids only cover issues affecting the community partially, not well or very poorly.



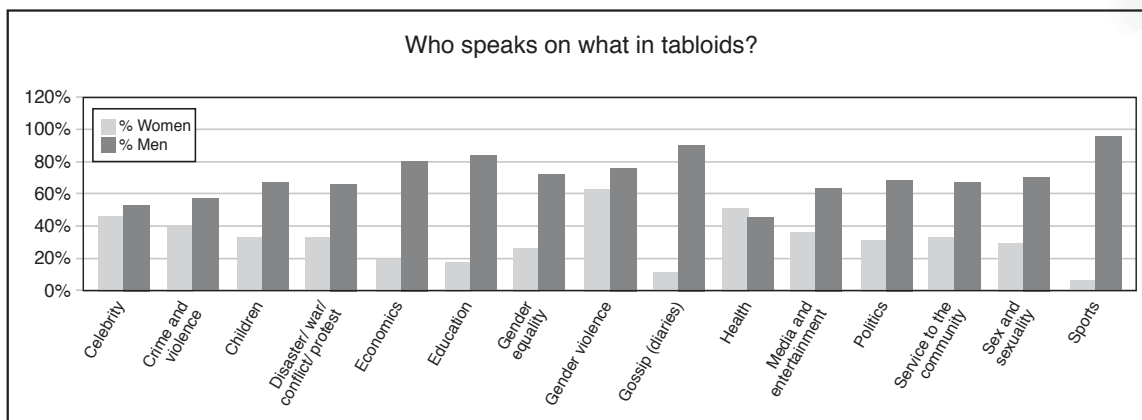
- *The main reason for reading tabloids, especially among women, is for entertainment and escapism:* Some 60% women and 50% men said they read tabloids to “catch up on the gossip.” Other reasons given by women included looking at photos of celebrities and “to have a laugh.” Other reasons given by men included more serious reasons, like news coverage. Men also like the headlines. Significantly, none of the women said they liked the headlines, which often perpetrate blatant gender stereotypes.



- *Tabloids are not the main source of news for their readers:* Tabloids are *not* the main source of news for their audiences; indeed other than the internet they are the least likely source of news. Overall, TV is the main source of news for audiences in the three countries (although there are country variations, such as Mauritius, in which radio is cited as the main source of news).
- *Despite the fact that they read tabloids a lot, audiences are aware that tabloids do not always tell the truth:* When asked to select from a long list of what they dislike about tabloids, 52% women and 50% men said they do not always tell the truth (see figure 2.13). The second highest proportion said that tabloids exaggerate. Men said that tabloids do not provide useful local information.
- *Gender biases abound in the way stories are told:* Applying the Gender and Media (GEM) classification system for the items monitored, the

research found that that about two thirds of these items demonstrated gender biases of one kind or the other, with only one third classified as “gender aware” (see 2.14). Audiences perceived a high level of blatant stereotypes.

- *Women’s views are often ignored:* Women constitute 25% of news sources in tabloids in the three countries monitored compared to the Southern African regional average of 19% in the Gender and Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) the latest study for which such figures are available for the mainstream media. In Mauritius and Tanzania the figures are exactly the same for tabloids and the GMMP (24% and 18% respectively).
- *South African tabloids have the highest proportion of women sources:* At 30%, women sources in tabloids in South Africa were the highest of the three countries and slightly higher than in South Africa’s GMMP figure of 26%.
- *But the voices of black women are still marginalised:* At 18%, black women are better represented in tabloids than in the mainstream media (7% in the GMBS) but are still grossly under-represented relative to their strength in the population (45%).
- *Women are more likely to be seen than heard:* Women in the tabloids monitored constituted 35% of all images (compared to 25% of sources). The majority of audiences in all countries, and especially women in Tanzania, believed that there are more pictures of women than men in tabloids even though this is in fact not the case. This points to the power of visual imagery.
- *Women have little to say on ‘hard core’ issues:* As in the findings in both the GMBS and GMMP, women’s views are under-represented in all topic categories in tabloids, especially in sports, politics and economics. Unlike the mainstream media, in which women had more to say than men in only the gender equality topic category, in tabloids men’s views predominate even in this topic category. The only topic category in which women’s views predominated in tabloids was health, with celebrity news a close second.



- Male reporters predominate:* Tabloid newsrooms, like those of their mainstream counterparts, are dominated by men. The monitoring showed that women journalists constituted 29% of those who wrote stories, compared to 22% print journalists in the GMBS. This varies across countries, from 37% women writers in South African tabloids to 21% in Tanzania.
- Gender stereotypes are reinforced in the roles that women and men are portrayed in:* The only occupational category in which women predominate in tabloids is as beauty contestants, home makers and domestic workers, office workers, social workers and students. Men on the other hand predominate in a range of roles, from professional, to NGO, to business person, labourers and drivers, religious figures and politicians.
- Older women are virtually non-existent:* Another way that subtle stereotypes are reinforced in tabloids (as in the mainstream media) is the tendency for older women to be virtually non-existent in coverage. Figure 2.25 shows that across all countries in which the monitoring took place, women predominate in the 20-34 year old category and become virtually non-existent in the age categories over fifty.
- Women are more likely to be identified according to a personal relationship than men:* In contrast 18% of women sources were identified according to a personal relationship in tabloids compared to 2% of men.
- Audiences, especially women, are unhappy about the blatant stereotyping of women in tabloids:*

 - Some 69% women said they feel uncomfortable when they see sexual images of women in tabloids. Roughly equal proportions of men (31%) found such images entertaining as said they felt uncomfortable about them.
 - The monitoring yielded some interesting examples of more gender aware reporting.* These included women in new roles, men caring about their children, a gay man seeking out a partner in the UK, etc.
 - Audiences would like to see greater diversity in the way women and men are portrayed:* When asked what other ways they would like to see women represented, the top two choices of women and men were in professional and leadership roles. When asked how else audiences would want to see men represented they both gave as their first choice “parents.” Women gave “homemakers” as their second choice and men “non traditional roles” as their second choice.
 - They would like more positive and local news:* In findings very similar to the Gender and Media Audience Study (GMAS), the study found that overwhelmingly what women and men would like more of in their daily tabloid are more positive stories, as well as more local/community news.
 - And less violence, pornography and victimisation:* When asked what they wanted to read *less* about in their tabloids, men cited violence and crime while women pointed at pornography and women as victims.

Recommendations

Against this background, the following key recommendations emerge from the research, divided into different stakeholder groups responsible for their implementation.

Gender and media activists:

- Conduct campaigns to publicise the findings and devise strategies for increasing gender awareness and sensitivity in the tabloid industry.
- Broaden media literacy, consumer awareness and activism within, especially the taking up of complaints against sexist reporting through existing regulatory bodies.
- Conduct further research into the extent to which sex actually sells, and conversely, measures that can be taken to grow female audiences and markets.
- Sensitise tabloid owners and editors of the role that tabloids play in socialisation and in either perpetrating or challenging stereotypes.
- Offer support in developing HIV/AIDS, gender and diversity policies through the Media Action Plan on HIV and AIDS and Gender.
- Seek partnerships with tabloids around specific campaigns like the Sixteen Days of Activism, the 50/50 and the "Making IT work for gender justice" campaigns.

Tabloid owners and editors

- Adopt Codes of Conduct and policies that define sexist reporting and imaging and seek to promote more inclusive, gender-aware editorial content.
- Involve women in the drawing up of such guidelines.
- Have in-house complaints mechanisms that give readers the chance to complain and obtain redress quickly and at no cost.
- Encourage complaints of a gender nature and act on these as such cases play a significant role in prompting debate and change.

Gender ministries and public bodies

- Publicise the findings of research such as this and engage with tabloid owners on more progressive approaches.
- Form partnerships with tabloids in providing advisory services to women, for example on domestic violence, making use of the newspapers as well as their websites, and using this as an opportunity to empower women in the use of ICTs.

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● Writers Bio

Colleen Lowe Morna is Executive Director and Sikhonzile Ndlovu is a Researcher at Gender Links.



Media and Gendered Violence in Canada and Romania

By Valentina Marinescu

Abstract

The present comparative analysis starts from the preeminence and widespread social issue of violence against women and children in the entire world and focused on two countries: Romania and Canada. Despite the fact that these countries seemed to have little in common regarding the economic, social and political life we consider that the phenomenon of violence against women and children displayed some fundamental, basic characteristics that could be similar. Moreover, a focused international comparison might shed new light in this area. The article will try to offer an answer at the following question: What is the link between the ways in which journalists re-present gender in their portrayals of violence against women and the general legal framework that regulate this issue in the case of Canada and Romania?

Key words

gender violence, domestic violence, child abuse, media

Domestic violence in Canada and Romania

In 2006, *Statistics Canada Today* (2006) released a comprehensive summary about the prevalence and severity of violence against women in Canada. Findings from the report show that women are more likely than men to be the victims of the most severe forms of spousal assault, as well as spousal homicide, sexual assault and stalking. Trends in various types of violence against women, as recorded in Canadian police statistics, are mixed. Sexual assault is one of the most under-reported crimes. Fewer than 10% of sexual assaults in both survey years were reported to the police. The report found that eight out of every 10

spousal offenders were reported to police on only one occasion during the 10-year time frame. Persons accused of repeated spousal violence (those with two to four police-reported incidents of spousal violence) accounted for 18% of the total. Only 1% was considered chronic abusers and they were involved in five or more reported incidents.

According to the same report, victims' decisions to report violence to criminal justice and social services depend on a variety of factors, some of which include fear of the offender, shame and embarrassment, and regional availability of services. The majority of victims of spousal assault and over 90% of sexual assault victims did not

seek support from the criminal justice system or social services. Between 1999 and 2004, the number of female victims of spousal assault who contacted police or social services remained steady, with the same trend for the number of women accessing shelter services.

In Romania the statistics concerning the most grave offences of violence (Nicoara, Ojog 2006) show that in 2005, 40 parents were victims of the homicide committed by their children, there were 54 victims of murder committed by spouses, 29 victims of body injuries or grave body injuries committed by spouses and 11% were victims of hits that caused the death of the spouse. Referring to children victims of their parents' violence, figures show that in 2005, 23 victims of murder were recorded, out of which 15 were minors; also, 43 children were victims of parents who ill-treated them and 20 were raped by their parents. Moreover, in the same year, 5 children were the object of sexual corruption by their parents. In relation to economic violence, the same report indicates that in 2005, parents abandoned 2837 minor children. The emotional/psychological and the social forms of violence against women and children are not easy to reduce to statistics and almost impossible to punish.

The phenomenon of family violence in Romania is a "dual phenomenon," existent not only on the real plane, but also in Romanian women's and men's "collective mentality." In 2003, data resulting from national research regarding "Violence inside Families and at Working Places" (CPE 2003, 114) showed both the *real* manifestation of the family violence phenomenon for the whole studied sample of the population (n=1250 individuals).

14% from the sample declared that they had been victims of family violence during their lifetime and 8% declared the same for the last 12 months before the inquiry. The "collective mentality" was reflected in the number of persons who agreed with assertions like: "beating comes from heaven," "the husband who does not beat his wife does not truly love her," and "a wife is her husband's property."

The shape of this mixed set of relations is the way in

which models of preventing and fighting violence against children and women from the West and North America, in particular, are different from those utilised in other cultures. For example, in Romania, as compared with Canada, the beating of a child by his/her parents is still considered a part of the socialisation process by the family. Education is for a large amount of the population a family issue and the "law for preventing and fighting against domestic violence" does not contain any specific regulations related to these practices, as opposed, for example, to the Youth Protection Act in Quebec (1977).

Media's role

In this context, an important question arises and its answer constitutes the main research objective of the comparative between Romanian and Canadian: To what degree and in what way do the mass media contribute to the preservation and consolidation of violence against women and children as a social issue?



According to the existing literature, media plays a significant role as part of the social control apparatus, reproducing as well as representing violent behaviour and social order. This media role works at two levels, that of the content of media message and that of the practices of journalism. The research literature points primarily to two effects of media images of "violent behaviour." One is the amplification of crime and violent behaviour, and the second is the creation

of anxiety and fear of violence and crime. Many scholars have emphasised the role of the media in defining and shaping problematic social reality. Sociologists studying the social construction of violent behaviour have suggested that journalism contributes to the emergence of social problems by dramatising events, managing public indignation, or engineering “moral panics” about certain types of crime and deviance (Cohen 1972; Cohen and Young 1973). It has been also argued that journalism can serve an active and important role in the process of deviancy amplification. Cohen (1972) has argued that media definitions of reality must not be viewed in isolation but as influencing and being influenced by the reality-defining practices of other social agencies, such as the police, the courts, politicians, and interest groups. The effect that attributed to the joint practices of such institutions is that of a creation of an “amplification spiral.” Within this process, what was initially defined as a problem by the different agencies was subject to increased magnification.

Media texts disseminate and present gender stereotypes as real and natural human characteristics. In fact, as Connell shows, some images of gender-hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity predominate over others (Connell 1995, 615). This tendency in media texts is a matter of subordination of women, authority, aggression, while technical competence and emphasised femininity is subordinate to and defined by this hegemonic masculinity. Organised around themes of dependence, sexual receptivity, and motherhood, this femininity is characterised by “the display of sociability rather than technical competence and [by] fragility in mating scenes” (Connell 2002, 1987, 187).

Gender images in the media are frequently seen as delivering natural portraits of women. In fact, as most representations used in media texts, they are social constructions and depend on norms, values and experiences that in some events dominate a given society with a contextual and national character (Brown 1994; Lorber & Farrell 1991; Lorber 2005; West and Zimmerman 1987, 2002).

The findings

Both the qualitative and the quantitative research methods demonstrate this. Based on a “methods’ triangulation” principle and for validity reasons, two main methods of data collection had been used: quantitative content analysis and qualitative content analysis. The sample of data analysed is composed by the articles dealing with violence against women and children published by twelve newspapers, six Romanian and six Canadian in the same period of time: 1 June to 31 December 2006. The Romanian newspapers were all central (edited in the country’s capital – Bucharest) and distributed nationwide: *Ziua (The Day)*, *Romania libera (Free Romania)*, *Adevarul (The Truth)*, *Jurnalul National (The National Journal)*, *Libertatea (The Freedom)* and *Gandul (The Thought)*. Only two Canadian newspapers were national-the *National Post* and the *Globe and Mail* - one was a provincial (from Quebec region) - *Le Soleil* - and three were local (based in Montreal) titles - *La Presse*, *LeDevoir* and the *Gazette*. The total number of daily copies for each title was included and the total number of articles analysed was up to 805 articles: 313 articles in Romania’s and 492 in Canada’s cases respectively.

The comparative results of Canada and Romania showed that both type of national media had defined in a “realistic manner” the violent acts against women by using figurative photos (that is, images intending to deliver the image of a real, actual fact) in 176 and 120 cases for the Canadian and Romanian sample respectively. This fact connects with the findings, which indicated that in both types of press the maximum frequency of publishing such type of article had occurred in the first ten pages of any of the newspapers analysed.

The social order reproduced in both types of national - Canadian and Romanian – newspapers made an appeal at the “primary definers of the violent situation” (the State’s institutions, the Courts, the Police and the set of laws that punish and fight against this type of violent acts). Yet, the findings are in contradiction with the classical definition and place of those “primary definers” (Cohen, 1972, 1996, 2003; Katz, 1988, 1999). This constitutes a paradox from our perspective. In the period selected, the Canadian and Romanian journalists had

only named the police as an “institutional primary definer” in a given situation following the classical vein, as opposed to the other traditional “primary definers: the Court and the Laws, “which appear to be secondary definers” in the sample studied.

For the purpose of this analysis and in order to clarify this paradox, the Court and the Laws have been named “secondary indicators” instead of “secondary definers.” Concerning an organisation fighting against violence, it receives the proper name of “secondary definer” given that it is funded by the Government but it is a non-profit private organisation. This outcome shows the clear differences among the media appeal to public and private in the journals of both countries.

The data of the content analysis shows that the acts, which were under the Police investigation had been covered by the newspapers in a higher ratio than those that were under judiciary’s investigation (Court). On this topic, there has been published 195 Canadian and 271 Romanian articles respectively.

The main legal “pillar” invoked in both Romanian and Canadian articles in relation to images of violence against women was the “Penal Code.” 273 Canadian articles and 69 materials from the Romanian sample made reference to the punishments of the violent act in accordance with the national “Penal Code” stipulations.

An important aspect to note is the way in which mass communication makes public the norms that characterise such communities (Seato, 2005). In this regard, the differences might be stated as follows: the Canadian articles had quoted a large amount of “normative” sources – the experts in violence against women and children’s issues (304 quotations), the advocates (193 quotations), the policemen (326 quotations), the members of the Jury (264 quotations). In the Romanian case, their quotations were set at a minimum: 115 quotations from the Policemen, 25 quotations for the Court’s representatives and only one advocate quoted.

In analysing the way of “framing” the information about

violent acts against women, we used the distinction between simple, short news and in-depth articles. The content analysis results indicate that both Canadian and Romanian media favored the in-depth, large presentations of acts of violence against women (387 articles in the Canadian sample and 205 articles in the Romanian one). Much more, our analysis showed that the accent on gender as the main trait of the actors involved in the violent act disregard important characteristics involved in the journalistic description (for example, age, level of education, occupation, ethnicity and others. Thus, in both types of newspapers (Romanian and Canadian) the journalists cite “gender” and the image of women to construct the notion that a person of feminine gender is the victim of violent acts. We have used the intersection of six main variables in decomposing the “social identities” of the mediatised image of a women – physical traits, psychological characterisation, socio-ethnic belonging to a group, ethnic identity, religious characterisation and “race.” On these bases, the results of the quantitative analysis pointed out a relevant similitude in the hierarchy of main axes of women’s represented images within the media, both in Canadian and Romanian cases.

- a focus on the physical dimension of women’s identities in building their general image, both national media stressing the belonging of the victim to “gender”: feminine;
- the mediatisation through newspapers of the ethnic dimension in the case of women’s images. In this case we count 157 cases in the Canadian newspapers and 63 cases in the Romanian ones; and
- the minimum use of religious affiliation and the reference to “race” – for the Romanian and Canadian articles (60 women were religiously characterised and 84 had been racially differentiated, while in the Romanian case, 9 women were religiously characterised and, respectively, 2 cases in which their presentation inside an article comprised also the reference to “race”).

In the qualitative comparative analysis we establish some “thematic structures” of the texts that could offer us some indications about the elements used by the journalists in re-constructing acts of women and children. We had differentiated among some sets words that

could be considered as “clues” of the macro-structures of the Romanian and Canadian newspapers’ texts:

- words that denote the actors involved in acts of women and children; and
- words that constitute the normative vocabulary”- that is, those words that refer to the state’s institution, the laws and the ways of punishing women and children acts. According to van Dijk (1988:228) the biased and “stereotype-laden” character of a title is particularly true of all information and discourse that presupposes variable and conflicting, social and political attitudes.

One important difference between Romanian and Canadian ways of presenting the issue of violence against women was found in the analysis of the articles’ headlines. Thus, some of the elements that could comprise it were mentioned only in 13 occasions within the Romanian titles, while in the Canadian case they were recorded 116 times. From here, the lexical references at the legal aspects related to the women and children in the Canadian newspapers covered all the stages of punishing and fighting such acts. Words like “the court”, “the process”, “the policemen”, “the law-expert” and “prison” plus “the jail” had built a Canadian legal world more rich and easy to understand than that made only from “prison”, “police” and “law” in the Romanian case.

Regarding the identity of the individuals involved in the violent act, the analysis of the articles’ headlines showed a new difference between the two ways of covering the social issue of violence against women. The Romanian newspapers published articles with a pre-eminent “child-centric” character (65 occurrences of words that were derived from the noun “child”). In the Canadian case there was recorded a “feminine-biased” type of headlines (“woman”, “wife”, “girl”, “mother” were the words which recorded the greater usage within the Canadian titles analysed: 120 occurrences, as compared with the words enclosed in the “child” family - 40 occurrences).

The ways in which journalists topically assigned the positions and role of the women and children in the headlines were as such interesting “indicators” of their subordinate role within the women and children acts

depicted in the newspapers. That way of constructing the headlines had implicitly sent stereotypes related to their first-degree (and socially accepted) positions of helpless victims of the violent acts. Semantically, this common element found in the case of two different types of newspapers also suggested that women and children would have less the role of responsible agents in such events. In other words, both Canadian and Romanian journalists stressed and reconstructed the same “biased” and negative images of women and children as passive actors involved in acts of violence, that is, the role of “perfect victim” that was socially ascribed to them.

Conclusion

Dobash (1979) traces the origin of violence against women in the structure of the patriarchal family and points out that this is a form of male control and domination within a social hierarchy. Dworkin (1981) places this hierarchy within the context of the “seven tenets of male supremacy.” The second tenet is that “men are physically stronger than women and, for that reason, have dominion over them” (Dworkin 1981, 14). Along with that dominion, she adds, is the capacity to terrorise a whole class of persons (the third tenet) and the right to own women (tenet five) (Dworkin 1981, 14-19). We can assume that our analysis reinforces the above-mentioned theoretical considerations.

Also, our analysis was, to a certain degree, in accordance with the existing literature, the results pointing out that the “reproduction” of social order had deployed both local and transnational traits. In both countries, the reciprocal relations between the state and the media contribute to the projection of a specific social order in relation to violent acts, producing what is nationally thinkable about the nature of crime and strategies to control it. At the transnational level, both media used the police as “primary definers” of the violent acts, but we noticed significant differences related to the reconstruction within the media texts for the practices of the significant social agencies involved in punishing acts of violence against women and children– the courts, politicians (Cohen 1972). The journalistic treatments of raw information seemed to “obey” the same editorial

logic that assign to these kind of texts second-rank place in the hierarchy of news, a sort of half-hard news. This conclusion was in line with the observation of existing literature, according to which (Dowler, Fleming, Muzzatti, 2006):

“The portrayal of crime and justice is blurred, especially within news content, in which the most serious and violent crimes are given an entertaining angle and presented as ‘hard’ news, even though the facts are often distorted and misrepresented.”

Despite the fact that both Canadian and Romanian journalists made an equal appeal at the general legal national framework regulating that domain, we assessed that this type of information was not “adequate” to help the ordinary reader in changing his/her perception about the legal punishments applied in that case. That is, on the basis of the frequencies recorded at this time it was obvious that neither the Canadian nor the Romanian public could know exactly the specific law for preventing and fighting against violence against women and children. Only in four cases for the Romanian sample we recorded the mentioning of law no 217/2003 that is devoted to preventing and fighting against violence against women and children. Moreover, little mention occurred of the steps an individual could follow after such an act took place. From here, despite the differences they displayed in the functioning of the two legal and social work systems, we could suppose that, irrespectively of their geographical, social, ethical or national dependencies, the journalists would expressed a sort of social non-involvement in reporting this type of news, a sort of “self-assumed” neutrality.

● **Writers Bio**

Valentina Marinescu, Ph. D, Reader at the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work – Bucharest University (Bucharest, Romania). She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in media and society, and methods of researching mass communication. Her interests lie in media and communication studies in Eastern Europe, particularly in Romania, and in gender studies.

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Enhancing Young Women's Participation in ICT-Related Development

By George Mwika Kayange

Participants at the Civil Society ICT4D Workshop held on 21-22 January 2008 in Lilongwe, Malawi, unanimously agreed, once again, that women and girls were generally not given a chance to participate in issues pertaining to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) due largely to some inherent stereotyping in society towards the womenfolk.

The workshop, familiarly dominated by the men folk, therefore recommended that stakeholders develop and review strategies to encourage girls and women to participate in public life, including in ICT-related development endeavours.

The participants further noted that cultural and social attitudes often discriminate against women's participation in the fields of science and technology and consequently this limits their opportunities in the area of ICT. They observed that economically, most women are not independent and since the use of ICT goes hand-in-hand with adequate financial resources, accessing ICTs by young women is generally difficult. On the educational front, it was noted that the current inequitable allocation of educational resources favours boys and men. This entrenches marginalisation of girls and women.

Ironically, none of these concerns seemed to be fresh, as they have popped up repeatedly at various other forums within and outside the country. In fact, some of the concerns raised are already reflected in the country's draft National Youth Policy.

The document reads in part: "This policy therefore intends

to provide young women with adequate information, education, income generating activity (IGA) skills and such other skills which will effectively enable young women to be more self reliant and able to make informed choices. Sensitisation of the male folk on women's rights and gender is paramount."

Yet after more than ten years of advocating for cabinet approval of the draft policy document, very little appears to have been achieved with regards to addressing the place of young women in national development initiatives, including those that are ICT-related, despite the National Youth Council of Malawi (NYCOM) implementing a computer training programme for youths. NYCOM is mandated to ensure the effective implementation, coordination and evaluation of various programmes affecting the youth and instill national pride in them, as enshrined in the National Youth Council Act.

"When we provided computer training for the youth, we did our best to balance the numbers of boys and girls who would then become trainers of trainers (ToT) in their respective communities. Surprisingly, we have realised that there are still more boys than girls patronising the youth centres," said NYCOM Acting Executive Director, Aubrey Chibwana.

So among the strategies proposed, the workshop participants advocated for intensive ICT training programmes targeting women and girls after noting that they tend to adapt slowly to new technologies and suffer from an inferiority complex, making ICT a male domain.

The workshop, organised by a local youth NGO dubbed the Young Advocates for the Advancement of ICT-related Development (Y.A.A.ICT-D), sought to raise awareness about the crucial issues surrounding the development of an information society.

“Regarding the development of an information society, we are essentially looking at ICT policies, and ICT strategies that the government is putting in place. The role of the civil society organisations at that workshop, therefore, was to ensure that these strategies do reflect the local context,” said Y.A.A.ICT-D Executive Director, Kenneth Msiska.

The establishment of the Y.A.A.ICT-D four years ago augured well with the general consensus that the involvement of today’s youth in both decision-making and in implementation of all aspects of development – including ICT-related initiatives – is critical to the long-term success in achieving Millennium Development Goals, according to United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

A rough overview of the youth NGOs in Malawi indicates that the average group has over 65% males. Enhancing female participation is therefore one of the priorities of the gender issues for those youth groups that have identified gender issues as a priority.

In addition to their intellectual contribution, they bring unique perspectives that need to be taken into account, which not only have a significant bearing on all forms of gender imbalances but also need to be addressed in development planning. And when experts and other stakeholders talk of development planning today, it also includes strategically incorporating such issues into the draft National ICT for Development (ICT4D) Policy.

To emphasise the importance of ICT to national development, President Bingu wa Mutharika promised Malawians, on his return from the Connect Africa Summit held in Kigali, Rwanda from 29-30 October 2007, to develop policies that favour greater use of ICTs in various sectors of the economy.

Currently, the draft Malawi National ICT Strategic Plan

is directed at achieving the mission of transforming Malawi into an information-rich, knowledge-based and technology-driven high-income economy and society, and clearly sets out key steps towards the realisation of the Malawi vision for ICT, and one of these steps is the establishment of an enabling ICT Policy.

Incidentally, Y.A.A.ICT-D is among the members of the National ICT Working Group (NICTWG), a multi-sectoral national taskforce mandated to steer the consultative process of putting in place the National ICT4D Policy.

“As Y.A.A.ICT-D, we are there to provide input in the three areas that we are working in vis-à-vis gender, the rights of the youth and how ICTS can be deployed in the societies. What we believe is that we cannot talk of ICTs without involving young people since they are the biggest consumers themselves,” said Msiska, adding there was also need to pay particular attention to the needs of girls to strike gender balance in the use of ICTS.

The draft National ICT4D Policy acknowledges that currently ICT services and products do not effectively cater for the youth, women and other disadvantaged groups, therefore requiring that Malawi’s entry into the information age will demand rapid extension of access to ICT to all sections of the society.

In order to build the capacity of women, youth and other disadvantaged groups to implement ICT initiatives, the document proposes to “promote access to national ICT Development Fund to finance the development of and smooth running of ICT youth organisations in Malawi.”

It also recommends donor agencies, NGOs and other development partners to help in ICT capacity-building initiatives, and encourages Public and Private Partnerships (PPPs) to facilitate the roll-out of community-based ICT youth initiatives.

However, as experience elsewhere has shown, making available ICT services and products alone cannot work, but rather inspiring and empowering the target communities with appropriate skills to effectively use the available ICT services and products. Hence, to ensure

active participation of all Malawians “including women, youth and persons with disabilities” in developing the information society, the document lays down a list of strategies including imparting “ICT skills to girls, boys and women of Malawi.”

It is clear, therefore, that there have been significant efforts to enhance participation of youth, particularly young women, in both the draft National Youth Policy as well as the draft National ICT4D Policy. The remaining challenge, however, is to turn policy rhetoric into action. Some of the key members of the NICTWG agree with the observation that articulation of policies in many other fields apart from the ICT4D has not matched with implementation or operationalisation of the same on the ground. The same scenario could remain true as regards implementation of the draft National ICT4D policy when it finally gets the cabinet’s approval.

The Department of Information Systems and Technology (DISTMS), under the Ministry of Information and Civic Education, is responsible for coordination of the implementation of the policy and currently hosts the secretariat for the NICTWG.

Government Wide Area Network (GWAN) Manager at DISTMS, Patrick Machika, conceded that putting in place a policy document was one thing, but operationalising it was another, even though he was quick to pledge the ministry’s commitment in ensuring that the policy achieves its set goals when it is approved. He revealed that a pilot project, for example, was in the pipeline to soon establish telecentres in the district of Mangochi to be run by a group of women with funding from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The project will, however, be coordinated by the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) under the same ministry.

“What I feel should be done in order to enhance active participation of young women in ICT-related development is to improve our coordination with various stakeholders. For example, we are already planning to build strong links with the Ministry of Gender, Child Welfare and Development as well as with NGOs that are working in the area of women development,” Machika said.

He also added that there was also need to first draw lessons from other countries that could provide useful case studies before embarking on implementation. He said in South Korea, for example, he saw a project where housewives were being trained in IT, after noting that children – including girls – spent more time at home with their mothers than with their teachers in school.

However, Machika noted that there was a beacon of hope as regards enhancing participation of young women in ICT as more girls than boys were now enrolling in various IT related courses, including at the National College of IT (NACIT), one of the most renowned and accredited IT colleges in the country, which is also run under DISTMS.

“There has been an improved intake in numbers of girls against boys at NACIT. In the past three years, we have seen an increase of about 60 % for girls enrolling in our various IT programmes at diploma, advanced diploma and degree levels. We think this is a good indicator that we are slowly breaking the [gender] stereotype,” he said.

22-year-old Yamikani Jambo, who will be completing her degree in Computing and Information Systems at NACIT this year, said high costs coupled with the gender stereotypes were among the main factors, which used to contribute towards the low intake of girls into IT-related courses in the past.

“I think parents are now beginning to [slowly] realise that they can invest some money in their daughters too, which wasn’t the case before. IT courses are very expensive in this country. My parents are spending K260, 000 (about 1900 USD) for tuition, 650 Pounds for registration, besides spending on travel and other related costs since this is not a boarding institution. Not many parents would want to spend that much on girls especially if there were boys around,” she said.

But YAAICT-D’s Msiska concurred with Machika that there was need to improve coordination with various stakeholders including the women themselves if implementation of the draft Policy was to be effective,

while NYCOM's Chibwana suggested there was need to begin with homes first before undertaking any programme.

"The first step is to ensure that everybody in Malawi owns the ICT policy and that the people are aware of what is contained in the document so that it is easy for different stakeholders to monitor the implementation process," said Msiska after the workshop that his organisation held for civil society organisations.

"Indeed, there is need for collective efforts. But we must first begin with dialogue at household level. Parents at home must be encouraging girls to play with the PC too rather than just leaving it to the boys. They must also begin to encourage girls to be as active as boys at the youth centres in their communities," said Chibwana.

Whichever the case or argument, however, the general consensus is that the policy documents – both the youth and the ICT4D policies – will continue to remain irrelevant unless stakeholders, including government, exert more efforts in ensuring that they are not just approved at cabinet level, but also that whatever strategies are contained in these documents regarding enhanced participation of marginalised groups are translated into real actions on the ground.



Writers Bio

George Mwika Kayange is media consultant and Director of the Child Rights Information and Documentation Centre (www.cridoc.net)

Gender and Media (GEM) Summit and Awards
Whose News, Whose Views
Critical Citizens, Responsive Media
10-12 August 2008 (TBC)

The Gender and Media Southern Africa (GEMSA) Network, in partnership with Gender Links (GL) and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), will be holding the third Gender and Media (GEM) Summit from 10-12 August 2008 in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Under the banner, *"Whose news, Whose views Critical citizens, Responsive media"* the Summit will include parallel seminars on gender and the media in following categories:

- Creating a critical citizenry: media literacy; reading the media.
- Consumer activism: alerts; complaints; media regulation.
- Engaging with media consumers: audience surveys; direct engagement with consumers.
- Policy and practise: are public mandates being fulfilled; participation in community radio.
- Gender and media diversity: GMDC; gender in media content.
- Research and monitoring: the findings of the Gender Links tabloid research; advertising research.
- Media training: Creating media literate students; internships.
- Media activism: I stories; digital stories.

The Summit is being coordinated by the GEMSA Secretariat based at the offices of Gender Links in Johannesburg. For more information on the Summit contact:

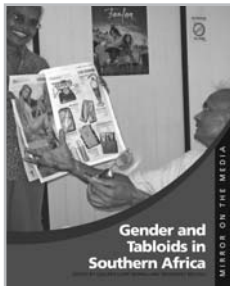
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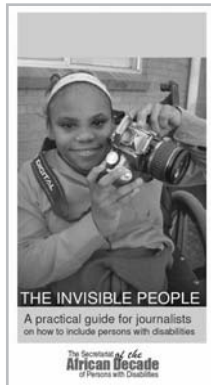
Mirror on the Media: Gender and Tabloids in Southern Africa

Edited by Colleen Lowe Morna and Sikhonzile Ndlovu

Press freedom and the discovery of new markets among the lower paid working classes previously not reached by the written media have led to a mushrooming of newspapers that are not only tabloid in form but also in content- visual; sensational; superstitious; feeding off local celebrity news and scandals. They reach millions of people. Timely, provocative and well-researched, this sixth issue of Mirror on the Media by Gender Links and partner organisations is the first comprehensive study not just of gender and tabloids in Southern Africa, but of this phenomenon in the region more broadly.

Cost: R50/\$10

To place an order, send an e mail to execassistant@genderlinks.org.za; or phone 27 (0) 11 622 2877 or fax 27 (0) 11 622 4732.

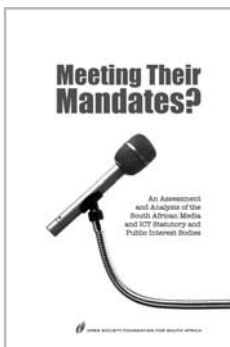


A Practical Guide for Journalists on How to Include Persons with Disabilities

Secretariat of the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities

This guideline for journalists was developed to help support and promote the human rights of persons with disabilities through media. The manual discusses key disability issues, key messages and principles for journalists wanting to support the human rights of Africans with disabilities. The manual also deals with terminology. According to the publishers, media "can help the some 80 million persons with disabilities in Africa that are often discriminated against and excluded from schools, work opportunities and health services, to become more visible in their societies."

Download from <http://www.africandecade.org/>



Meeting Their Mandates

Open Society Foundation

In 2005, the Open Society Foundation for South Africa embarked on a project to analyse and assess the degree to which media statutory bodies in South Africa were fulfilling their mandates, to assess their contribution to media diversity and enhancing access to media and ICTs. This report provides an overview of what the research found, as well as a review legislation, regulations and policy relevant to the provision of public communications. It aims to add to current debates on the independence of media in South Africa as well as issues of access to media for a diverse range of voices and toward the promotion of good media practice in general.

Download from <http://www.osf.org.za>



Media Legislation in Africa: A Comparative Legal Survey

by Guy Berger

The work is the result of a research undertaken, with the support of UNESCO, by a team of African scholars coordinated by Professor Guy Berger, head of the School of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa. The study includes an overview of the existing media legislation in ten multi-party democratic countries in Africa and a comparative analysis, whilst also putting the legislation in perspective with regional and international standards and best-practices in the field of media law conducive to freedom of expression.

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CONCEPT AND EDITORIAL GUIDELINES

The Gender and Media Diversity Journal (GMDJ) Concept and Editorial guidelines

What?

The Gender and Media Diversity Journal is the biennial journal of the Gender and Media Diversity Centre (GMDC). The journal is intellectual but not academic. It provides up-to-date and cutting edge information on media diversity in Southern Africa and the space for the dissemination of research findings and projects; case studies; campaigns, policy developments; and opinion and debate on media practice in the region.

Each journal focuses on a different thematic areas identified in consultation with the GMDC advisory group. Inaugural issues (before the establishment of the GMDC) focused on the Global Gender Media Monitoring Project and the second on the Gender and Media Summit held in September 2006 under the banner "Media Diversity: Good For Business, Good for Democracy." Future issues will tackle themes such as quality and professionalism in the media: the case for new media; non-journalistic media; children's media; and the outcomes of the Media Action Plan on HIV AIDS and Gender involving editor's forums and media development NGOs across the region.

Why?

Despite its mission of "giving voice to the voiceless", the media worldwide is heavily biased towards covering the views of those in power, an elite group often defined according to race, ethnicity, class and gender. In Southern Africa, where democracy is a relatively new and fragile phenomenon, the media are still largely state dominated. The concept of a public media is weak. Albeit to different degrees, private and community media face political, organisational and financial challenges. Overall, whether in the public or private sphere, media ownership is concentrated in a few hands. The voices of those most affected by policies and unequal power relations in society are seldom heard even though they constitute the majority of news consumer population. Failure to understand and respond to audiences in all their diversity is also bad for business.

The journal aims to:

- Develop and share a body of knowledge on media diversity in Southern Africa.
- Promote more probing, analytical and contextual journalism.
- Share best practices on how to achieve greater diversity in media content, ownership and market share.
- Contribute to greater media literacy and responsiveness among ordinary citizens- women and men – in Southern Africa.

Each journal will contain:

- Introduction – editorial and news briefs
- Thematic focus
- Media watch
- Reviews and reports of programmes, projects, research, policy and development related to gender and diversity in the media.
- Opinion and letters.

The Southern Africa Media Diversity Journal targets media workers and owners, policy-makers, researchers, lecturers, student journalists, activists and those individuals and organisations working towards media diversity in the region.

Contributions are invited and solicited from groups and individuals such as these and commissioned by the editor.

When?

The journal comes out twice a year in September and March.

How to contribute

For further information and to request full contributors guidelines please contact
Gender Links
editor@genderlinks.org.za
Tel: + 27 11 622 2877



This issue of the Gender and Media Diversity Journal has been made possible through the financial support of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, HIVOS and OSISA.

