On 1 August 2018 South African women, galvanised by the #TotalShutdown campaign, marched to the Union Buildings to declare that they had nothing to celebrate during Women's Month. President Cyril Ramaphosa agreed to convene a summit, now scheduled for 1-2 November. *Photo: Thandokuhle Dlamini*

The challenges for women in the South African media are becoming less about numbers, and more about the underlying sexism in the media, with new threats like cyber misogyny emerging, according to the third *Glass Ceilings* survey[1] launched on 19 October 2018[2].

The study - undertaken by the South African National Editors Forum (Sanef) and Gender Links (GL) - finds that there have been dramatic shifts in the race and gender composition of media houses since 2006. Black men now comprise half of top media managers. The proportion of black women in *top* media management has increased fivefold but is still 20 percentage points lower than black men. Black women, who comprise 46% of the population, constitute 40% of *senior* managers in the media, suggesting that change is on the way.

But it comes at a turbulent time. With new media forms sweeping across the landscape, South Africa fits into the global media pattern of traumatic job losses, random and messy digitisation processes, a huge downturn in advertising revenue and a decline in sales and circulation. While only three out of the 59 media houses that participated in the

---

[1] The other two studies were undertaken in 2006 and 2009. The 2009 study formed part of a SADC-wide study.

[1] On 19 October 1977, the apartheid government banned The World and Weekend World as well as Pro Veritate, a religious publication that was run by the late Beyers Naude. The day was later known as Black Wednesday. It is commemorated as South Africa's national media freedom day.

study gave data on wages, this and general perceptions suggest a growing **gender wage gap** as a result of fewer senior and top managers and a growing throng of junior cadets running the social media platforms of media houses.

A new threat against women has also emerged in the form of the **cyber misogyny** that includes some of the ugliest forms of sexism being used to try and silence media women. But the media is operating in a climate of the #MeToo movement globally and the #Totalshutdown movement nationally, which has seen an increased assertiveness from women about sexism and patriarchal domination.

Table I: Key indicators of Women in the South African Media 2018 vs 2009			
	Female 2018 %	**Female 2009 %**	**Variance (2018 minus 2009) Percentage points**
Percentage of employees by sex			
Overall	49	50	-1
Print	53		
Television	52		
Online	51		
Radio	48		
OCCUPATIONAL LEVELS			
Unskilled	60	23	37
Semi-skilled	74	55	19
Skilled technical	38	51	-13
Professionally qualified	52	42	10
Board of directors	19	38	-19
Senior management	46	35	11
Top management	36	25	11
DEPARTMENTS			
Finance and Administration	79	61	18
Advertising/Marketing	53	59	-6
Editorial	53	52	1
Production	42	66	-24
Design	32	34	-2
Distribution	30	33	-3
Technical	18	23	-5
CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT			
Part time	56	61	-5
Full time, fixed term contract	50	55	-5
Full time open ended contract	53	49	4

The 2018 study, that took place between December 2017 and October 2018, aimed to assess progress ten years since the last Glass Ceilings Project, and also 25 years into democracy. Specific objectives included:

- To assess progress in achieving gender equality in the media, at decision-making and other levels.
- To assess progress in transforming work culture in the media from a gender perspective, and measure the gender gap in earnings in the media.

- To assess the gendered impact of the digital revolution on the composition, earnings and work culture in the media.
- To use the findings to develop strategic interventions to ensure gender equality in the media by 2030, in line with the Post-2015 SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.
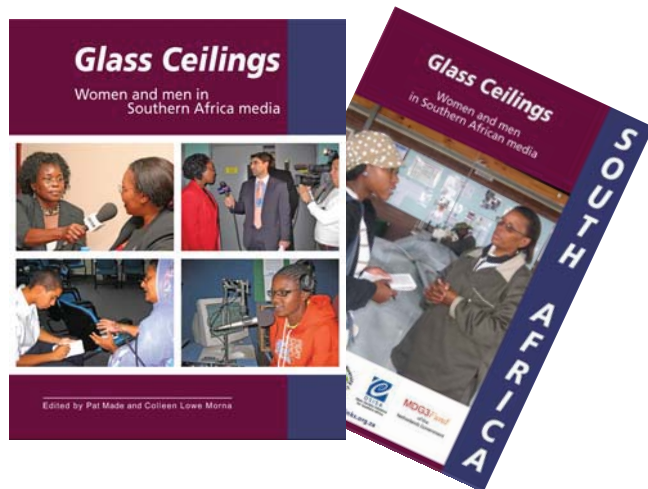
The study took place in the context of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development that calls for the mainstreaming of gender in all media laws, policies and training. It urges the media to achieve gender parity in media ownership and decision making as well as to give equal voice to women and men; challenge gender stereotypes and ensure balance and sensitivity in all coverage; especially that relating to gender violence.

Out of the 100 media houses approached, 41 answered the institutional questionnaire that provides quantitative data while 18 responded to the perception questionnaire distributed to nearly 200 media practitioners. Those that gave institutional data have a total staff of 10 054 (compared to 11 750 in the 2009 study, and 4 364 in the 2006 study). The sample included 20 print and online media houses; 34 radio; four TV and one TV/radio media houses.

Compared to nine media houses in 2006 and 11 in 2009, the study, funded by the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA), covered a much more diverse range of media than in the past. It included 45 community media; 13 private and one public media house, the South Africa Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). Key findings include:

- *Gender parity is a reality in the overall composition of South African media houses:* At 49% there are equal proportions of women and men in South African media houses compared to the SADC region which recorded 41% women in the media in 2015.
- *Some respondents identified themselves as "other" for the first time:* The other 2% comprises staff who identified themselves as others - (Gender Non-Conforming Persons). This is the first time that this parameter has been measured in the Glass Ceiling Study. The fact that 2% of staff are not identified as male or female is itself an indicator of progress over the last decade.
- *The bigger media houses have all achieved the 50% mark overall:* A total of 24 of the media houses surveyed have between 50%-85% women. The bigger news media in South Africa are in this league of 50% women and above. Media 24 has 57% women, followed by Tiso Black Star (54%); the Mail&Guardian (52%) and the SABC (50%).
- *Increase but still no parity at management level:* Between 2009 and 2018, there has been an increase in women in senior management from 35% to 46% and in top management from 25% to 36%. Women (47%) and men (41%) attributed the gender gap to men being taken more seriously than women. Women (39%) and men (26%) felt that women are by-passed in promotion processes. Women (35%) and men (28%) attributed this to the old boys' network.
- *The proportion of white men in top management has dropped but is still more than double that of white women:* White men, who constituted 46% of top media managers in 2006, have

dropped to 14% in 2018. White women in top management have dropped from 23% to 6% over the same period. But there are still more than double the proportion of white men (14%) to white women (6%) in top management in the media.

- **Black men are moving up the ranks at a much faster pace than black women:** The proportion of black men in top management in the media has more than doubled from 22% in 2006 to 50% in 2018. The proportion of black women in top management has gone up five fold, from 6% in 2006 to 30% in 2018, but this is still 20 percentage points lower than for black men. Black women (30% in top management compared to 46% of the population) are grossly under-represented. The gap is beginning to narrow for black women at senior management level, where they comprise 40% of the total.

- **There has been an increase in women middle managers, but decline in skilled professionals:** Women middle managers such as assistant editors, news presenters/anchors, correspondents, designers and producers have increased from 47% to 52%. However, there has been a decline in women skilled technical and academically qualified workers (such as reporters and sub-editors) from 51% to 38%. This may reflect the general decimation of these core foot soldiers as new media takes over the mainstream media.

- **The gender pay gap appears to be widening:** In the three media houses that provided data, the pay gap between women and men in 2018 at 23% is higher than in 2009 (17%). This may in part reflect the "eroded middle" in which women tend to predominate in the new media era, with the structure of media increasingly dominated by a few top executives, and a large number of junior staff responsible for social media.

- **Policies do not promote equal sharing of responsibilities in the home:** 81% of the media houses said they have maternity leave, compared to only 31% with paternity leave policies.

- **Sexual harassment is a daily reality for women in the media, but is not prioritised:** In 2018, 87% of media houses said they had sexual harassment policies, compared to 82% in 2009. Almost all media houses (91%) reported dealing with sexual harassment cases. Countless first-hand accounts in the report attest to sexist attitudes and practices at work and in the field. The SABC has set up a commission of inquiry into sexual harassment. But respondents agreed that race, growing audiences, reaching new audiences and beating competitors are a much higher priority at the moment than gender.

- **Cyber misogyny is a growing threat:** While only 6% of official respondents felt that cyber misogyny is an issue in South Africa, 30% of women and 9% of men who responded to the perception questionnaire agreed that women journalists do face cyber violence. The first hand account by Ferial Haffajee, a former chair of Sanef, and one of South Africa's most senior women editors, is chilling testimony to one of the ugliest emerging forms of gender violence in the media. Cyber misogyny may just be emerging, but like the speed of the social media that spawned it, is guaranteed to spiral out of control if not addressed seriously.

- **A new breed of young media women are asserting their rights:** The *Glass Ceilings 2018* reflects both a feminist backlash, and an increased anger and assertiveness by women in the media against sexism, which may be the result of the general *zeitgeist* of the times globally and nationally.

- **Key recommendations include:** Greater ownership and control of the media by women, especially black women; all media adopting gender and diversity policies; setting targets for achieving parity at all levels; banning sexism; calling out "mansplaining"; revealing and closing the gender wage gap; opening spaces for women to speak out; family friendly practices; self-monitoring and reporting.