

Mirror on the Media
Who talks on talk shows?

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List of Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome	MEJN	Malawi Economic Justice Network
ARV	Antiretroviral	MISA	Media Institute of Southern Africa
BAZ	Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe	MMP	Media Monitoring Project
CNG	Community Newspapers' Group	MMPZ	Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe
FAMWZ	Federation of African Media Women	NTV	National Television
GEM	Gender and Media	OSISA	Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa
GEMSA	Gender and Media Southern Africa Network	SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
GL	Gender Links	SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
GMAS	Gender and Media Audience Study	SMS	Short Messaging Service
GMBS	Gender and Media Baseline Study	ZAMPS	Zimbabwe All Media and Products Survey
GMMP	Global Media Monitoring Project	ZBH	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Holding
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Syndrome	ZIANA	Zimbabwe Inter-Africa News Agency
MBC	Malawi Broadcasting Corporation	ZTV	Zimbabwe Television

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Foreword



As the audience research carried out by Gender Links (GL) and partners shows, the majority of women and men across Southern Africa rely on radio as their main source of news. But advances in technology have opened a new possibility: being able to talk back to those who, through their control of the airwaves, also exercise a great deal of influence in our societies.

The radio talk shows taking our region by storm coincide with efforts to consolidate and deepen fragile democracies in many countries. Citizen participation is central to democracy. More so than just about any other medium, radio talk shows have the potential not just to build a more informed but a more participative citizenry. They also challenge the traditional hegemony of the media (especially the airwaves!) and empower citizens to “watch the watchdogs”; a practice that has been sadly lacking in the growth and development of the media in our region as part of the bigger Project Democracy.

But who talks on these talk shows? In some cases it is prearranged guests, and we probably have the nagging suspicion that certain categories of people get invited over and over again. In other cases it is free for all, yet even then there are some callers whose voices we have heard more than once. Often, it is a combination of the two.

What this report, that covers eleven shows in four Southern African countries shows, is that if radio talk shows are a barometer of citizenship, then women barely exist: as hosts, as guests or as callers. Most shows also don't cover many of the topics that women would like to talk more about.

Is that a cause for concern, one may ask? Certainly to radio stations trying to market their services in increasingly competitive environments, it should matter that 52% of the population are effectively being left out. This fact should also be a concern to all of us involved in the bigger Project Democracy. If democracy is about making every voice count, then every voice *should* count!

It is not good enough just to say that women are not available, or don't choose to call in. Why is this so? Is it because of their socialisation? Or because of economic reasons? Or because radio stations have not actively gone out to look for women's voices?

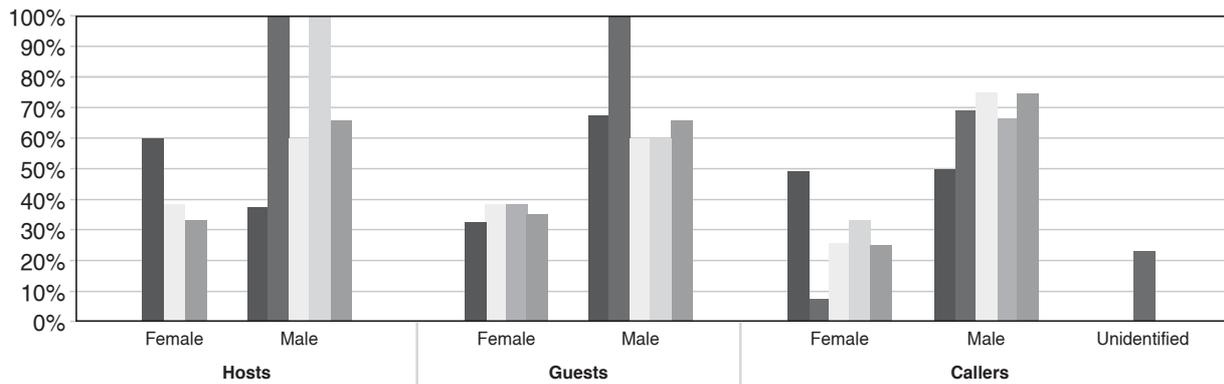
As I write this foreword, a well known South African radio talk show featured in this survey, whom we shared the results with, has just called our office to say that they have lined up four guests to talk about the President's State of the Nation Address, but all of them are men. Can we suggest any women who could be invited as panellists? Of course we can! And that is how change starts. And women claim their space as citizens. And democracy is deepened.

We hope that this research will spark many more such reflections - and action!

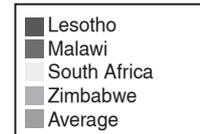
Colleen Lowe Morna
Executive Director, Gender Links and Chair, GEMSA

Executive Summary

Figure A: Host, guests and callers of radio talk shows disaggregated by sex per country



	Hosts		Guests		Callers		
Lesotho	62%	38%	33%	67%	49%	51%	
Malawi	0%	100%	0%	100%	8%	69%	23%
South Africa	40%	60%	39%	61%	25%	75%	
Zimbabwe	0%	100%	39%	61%	33%	67%	
Average	32%	68%	36%	64%	25%	75%	



Women are the missing voices in radio talk shows - as hosts, guests and callers. Although women would like to discuss more social topics, including gender equality, these are generally missing in the programme line ups. To the extent that gender issues are raised in chat shows, they often reinforce stereotypes about the role of women and men in society and these go unchallenged by the predominantly male hosts of the shows.

These are among the key findings of a survey of eleven radio talk shows in four Southern African countries (Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa and Zimbabwe) conducted by Gender Links in partnership with country chapters of the Gender and Media Southern Africa (GEMSA) Network from June-July 2005.

As illustrated in the summary graph and table above, the study, that forms part of the ongoing *Mirror on the Media* project found that:

- Overall women only make up 25% of callers to radio talk shows. But there are significant country differences with women callers constituting 49% of the total in Lesotho; 33% in Zimbabwe; 25%

in South Africa and a mere 8% in Malawi.

- On average, women constitute 32% of the talk show hosts. Lesotho had the highest representation of women as talk show hosts (62%) followed by South Africa (40%). Malawi and Zimbabwe had no female hosts on any of the shows monitored.
- Women made up only 36% of talk show guests. In South Africa and Zimbabwe women made up 39% of all guests called to the shows. Lesotho had slightly fewer (33%) female guests and Malawi had no female guests at all.
- Only 9% of the 55 shows monitored focused specifically on gender-related issues. This ranged from 20% in Lesotho to no such programmes in Malawi. The accompanying audience survey showed that listeners in all of the countries (and especially women) want to talk about gender equality and women’s empowerment, a topic which received little air time during the monitoring period.
- Stereotypes about women are often reinforced in chat shows without being challenged. Examples of the more blatant stereotypes encountered in the monitoring included the notion that “cruel”

women are to blame for orphans and vulnerable children; women are “over emotional” and “cannot be associated with reason and calmness” and that the way young women dress is responsible for gender violence.

- Although presenters tried to be fair, women guests and callers were sometimes addressed in patronising and demeaning ways. For example in South Africa a talk show host asked a woman who called in to a current affairs talk show on a case of corruption if she knew anything about politics. In Lesotho, during a discussion with two business women on running a catering business the host played a song on how men in the country love it when their wives cook delicious food.
- Presenters sometimes used or allowed inappropriate language to be used; such as the reference to HIV/AIDS as a “tsunami” in a Lesotho chat show.
- Hosts often missed opportunities to take up interesting gender debates. For example a programme in South Africa on male grooming failed to explore the way boys and men are socialised and how this affects their sense of dress.
- However, the monitoring did yield examples of ways in which gender discussions can come into mainstream debates. For example in an entertainment talk show in South Africa the presenter show-cased a film produced by a young female documentary maker and highlighted the need to make women part of mainstream film making.
- The monitoring also yielded examples of changing attitudes among men. For example the mostly male callers on the *Taba Kgolo* show in South Africa, reflecting on who should be the next Deputy President, said they thought that this person should be a woman. One man said he would prefer a woman deputy president because men are more interested in furthering their own ambitions whilst a woman would deliver the services that are required.
- Although audiences did not seem to think it made a difference whether or not more women called in, the qualitative monitoring showed that debates in shows that had a greater gender balance displayed a broader range of perspectives that

made for more interesting debate. For example a talk show in Zimbabwe in which a male panellist challenged the view of a woman panellist that young women should finish their education before they get married on grounds that “they may not find a husband” led to a robust debate on the importance of education for the empowerment of women.

The reasons for the generally low participation by women in radio talk shows are complex. In South Africa, the two shows hosted by women had the highest proportion of women callers, and many complained about the approach of male hosts in the other programmes which women seemed to find intimidating. However, having more women guests did not seem to change the extent to which women called in: in South Africa the show with the greatest gender balance with regard to guests also had the lowest proportion of women callers.

A number of findings suggest that the topics discussed could have a bearing on women’s participation. In South Africa, for example, participation by women increased visibly in a show normally dominated by male callers when the topic switched from current affairs to health and education.

A host in Zimbabwe suggested that social and economic factors are at the root of women’s reluctance to call into programmes: “During the phone-in segment, most callers are men. I don’t know whether that is influenced by the fact that phones are regarded as the property of the man within the home or not. And also, I think this might be because women are generally afraid to express themselves in public.”

The study proposes a range of measures to achieve greater gender balance and sensitivity in radio talk shows. These include: more in-depth, gender disaggregated audience research; a greater diversity of topics and in particular more attention to topics that are of direct concern to women; a conscious effort to achieve gender balance in the selection of hosts and guests (where stations have the most control); gender awareness training for hosts; as well as gender and media literacy training for the public, especially women.



Radio in a suitcase: Maria Soares of Feminist International Radio Endeavour (FIRE) in Costa Rica believes that radio is the best way of making women's voices count.
Photo: Colleen Lowe Morna

Chapter One Overview

This report is part of the four country *Mirror on the Media* project, which aims to extend quarterly gender and media trends surveys developed on a pilot basis in 2004 to become a monitoring tool, in between major research studies, for measuring progress in achieving gender balance in the media in different areas and genres.

Background

Previously this project focused on news items. The pilot project involved South Africa, Mauritius and Swaziland. In this phase the focus has shifted to other media genres, specifically radio talk shows and to three new countries, Malawi, Lesotho and Zimbabwe.

In 2004, Gender Links (GL) developed a three country project to work through gender and media networks in developing quarterly media monitoring reports with a strong emphasis of quantitative monitoring. The pilot developed tools around three important kinds of monitoring:

- Generic monitoring of a day or period of time, useful in conducting spot checks, but simplifying the tools used in the Gender and Media Baseline Study (GMBS) so that these can be more easily applied by networks.
- Monitoring of a specific subject, gender violence, during the Sixteen Days of Activism on Gender Violence. This involved monitoring the period before and during the campaign in order to give a comparative perspective. The monitoring drew on existing knowledge and trends on covering gender violence, including GL's extensive training experience in the region, to give an in-depth analysis that will be shared with editor's forums.
- Participating in the one day GMMP (Global Media Monitoring Project) 2005.

Arising from this pilot project, GL sought to extend the *Mirror on the Media* project by:

- Working with three other country networks and partners.
- Devising methodologies for monitoring media genres other than news (an important proposal from the Gender and Media (GEM) Summit in 2004) including entertainment, advertising and radio talk shows: all key ways in which gender stereotypes are either perpetuated or may be challenged.

Why Radio Talk Shows?

Radio as a news medium has significant reach into both rural and urban areas that have little other media presence. Radio therefore has the potential to open avenues to participation for marginalised groups of people and can be an important and accessible link to the wider community. Radio talk shows offer people the opportunity to participate and become involved in public life. Participation in talk shows can serve as a way of mobilising the public on pertinent issues.

Radio talk shows play a potentially large role in promoting political participation as they can be a forum where ordinary citizens are able to bring their concerns, opinions and complaints into the public sphere, question key decision-makers and hold them to account, thus strengthening democracy.

Some of the key challenges facing radio broadcasters are to educate, inform and entertain, change mindsets and attitudes and ensure that the voices, opinions and experiences of the whole population are heard.

Previous talk show analysis has found that:

- Women are more often interrupted than men;
- Men are more often invited to speak than women;
- Female guests are addressed in a more familiar and casual way than male guests (Gallagher, M. *Gender Setting*).

Objectives

The monitoring project aimed to:

- Establish the extent that women and men call into radio talk shows;
- Determine the extent to which women and men are invited guests on talk shows and the capacity in which they appear;
- Explore what issues are discussed on radio talk shows and the extent to which gender issues are addressed;
- Determine the extent to which men and women speak on different topics;
- Determine the role of talk show hosts in either challenging or perpetuating gender stereotypes.

Methodology

Each country monitored a minimum of two radio stations, including a mix of public and private media as well as current affairs and socially-oriented shows. The monitoring took place in June 2005 in most instances but in some cases technical problems resulted in part of the monitoring taking place in July and August as well. Five radio talk shows were monitored for each station, over a staggered week (in other words while the monitoring took place over one month, it happened on different days of the week over that month to reflect possible variances related to week days). The monitoring included both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

To reflect on the findings of the content analysis from the perspective of listeners, the research included interviews with 20 regular listeners of each talk show (ten men and ten women). Where possible the monitors conducted interviews with talk show hosts. The full methodology is appended as **Annex 1-3**. A list of interviews conducted is appended as **Annex 4**.

Media monitored

As illustrated in this table, the monitoring covered ten stations in four countries (two stations each in Lesotho, Malawi and Zimbabwe and four in South Africa); seven of these public and three private stations.

Country	Media	Show	State	Private
Lesotho	People's Choice FM	Let's Talk		✓
	Radio Lesotho	Seboping	✓	
Malawi	Capital Radio	Newstalk		✓
	MBC Radio	Open Forum	✓	
South Africa	Kaya FM	Kaya Talk		✓
	Metro FM	Given Mkhari show	✓	
	SAFM	After 8 debate	✓	
	Thobela FM	Afternoon Talk		
Zimbabwe	Radio Zimbabwe	Taba Kgolo	✓	
	Spot FM	Chakafukidza dzimba matenga	✓	
		Youth Forum	✓	

The shows chosen focus on current affairs and social issues. In Lesotho, *Let's Talk on* People's Choice FM is a socially-oriented show which appeals to all age groups and which discusses various concerns that ordinary people have. It is broadcast daily in Sesotho. *Seboping*, on the government-owned Radio Lesotho, covers political issues and current affairs. It is also broadcast daily in Sesotho and appeals to an older group of listeners.

In Malawi, the privately owned Capital Radio *Newstalk* and Open Forum on Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) Radio are both current affairs and socially oriented shows which tackle a wide range of issues from politics and business to health, education and violence against women.

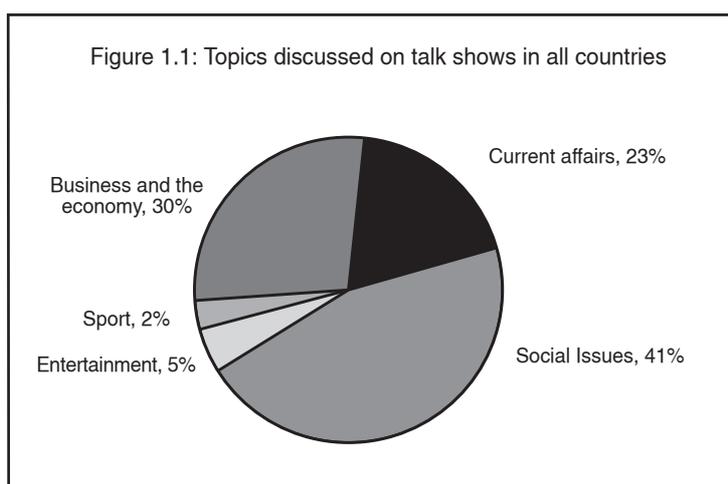
Kaya Talk is broadcast in the evenings on the privately-run Kaya FM in Johannesburg, South Africa. This is a current affairs and lifestyle talk show which tackles issues ranging from entertainment, to living positively with HIV/AIDS to current news and business-oriented issues. Metro FM's *Given Mkhari Show* mostly features current a political and business topics. The *After Eight* debate on SAFM poses topical debates on issues which range from politics to sport. SAFM's *Afternoon Talk* is a more socially oriented covering a range of topics including arts, politics, culture and lifestyle. *Taba Kgolo* which is broadcast in Northern Sotho on Thobela FM covers mostly current affairs as well as social issues.

In Zimbabwe, Spot FM's *Youth Forum* show is broadcast in English and attracts mainly the urban and more affluent population, both young and old. The show focuses on social issues. *Chakafukidza Dzimba Matenga* is broadcast in Shona on Radio Zimbabwe and literally translated means "what covers the house is the roof", but can be interpreted to mean "you can never know what happens in people's private lives." The show deals with the problems that ordinary people face in their everyday lives.

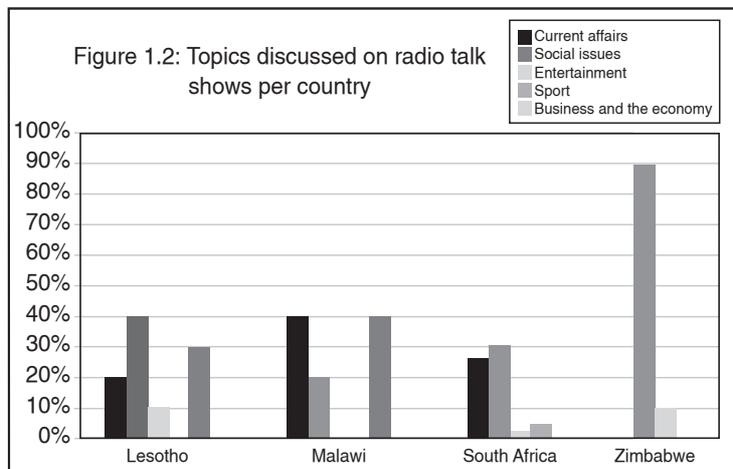
Overall findings

Topics

Overall social issues (41%) dominated talk shows in the countries monitored. This was followed by business and the economy (30%), current affairs (23%), entertainment (5%) and sport (2%).

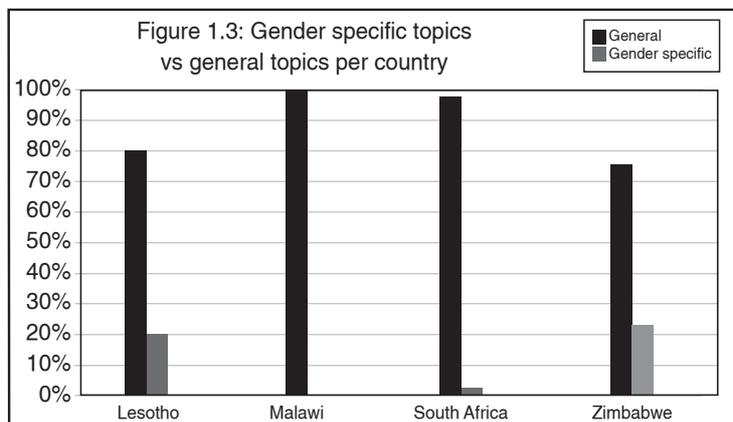


As illustrated in figure 1.2, there were, however, significant differences between countries. Zimbabwe talk shows predominantly (90%) focused on social issues. Social issues also featured top of the list in Lesotho, but with a wider variety of other topics being discussed. Malawi (40%) and South Africa (38%) had business and the economy as the most discussed topic, with current affairs featuring quite prominently. Entertainment featured marginally in Lesotho (10%), South Africa (2%) and Zimbabwe (2%). Sport only featured in South Africa (4%).



Gender as a topic

Only 9% of the talk shows focused specifically on gender-related concerns. As illustrated in figure 1.3 this ranged from 20% in Lesotho to no such programmes in Malawi.



What listeners want to talk about

The findings of the listeners survey showed that in some cases listeners would rather be talking about different issues. As illustrated in figure 1.4 for example, listeners in all of the countries (and especially in South Africa) want to talk about gender equality and women’s empowerment, a topic which received little air time during the monitoring period.

In Malawi where business and the economy was one of the most discussed issues, listeners are apparently not interested in this topic at all. Zimbabwean listeners showed a strong preference for discussing social issues, the predominant topic of discussion during the monitoring period.

Social issues featured as the most preferred topic in all of the countries except Malawi where current affairs came top.

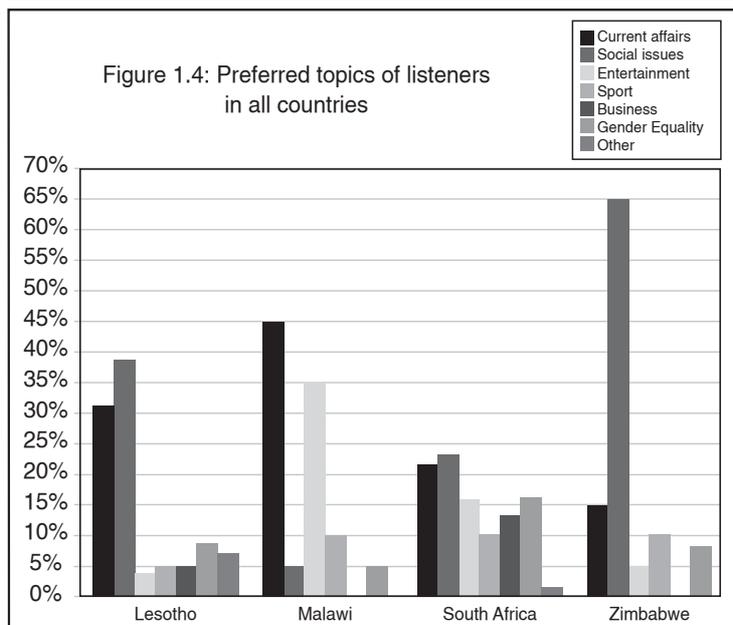
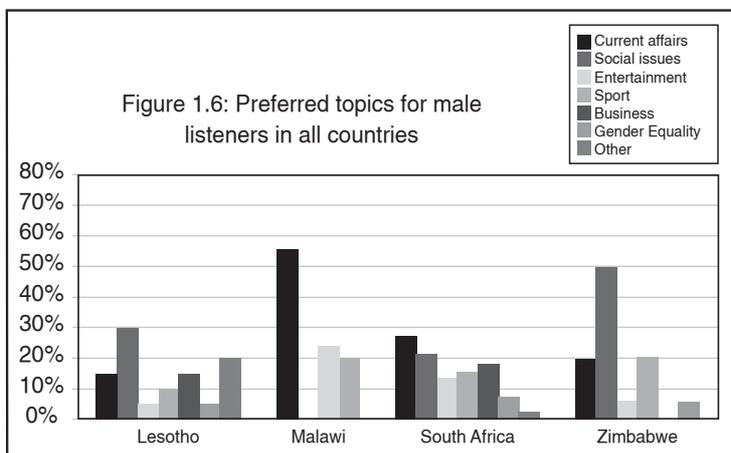
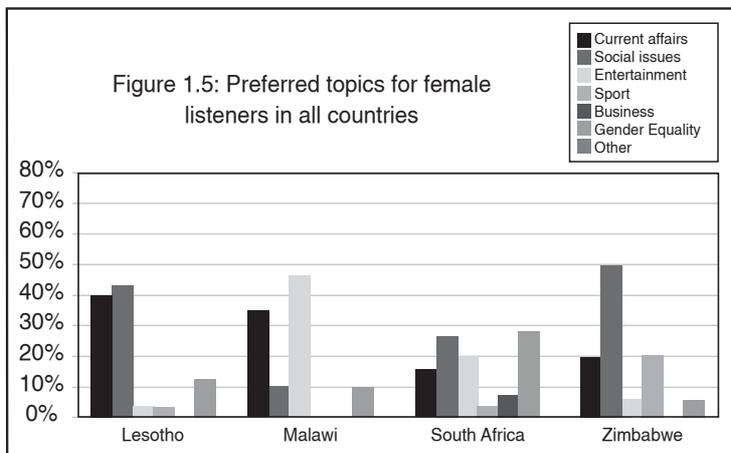


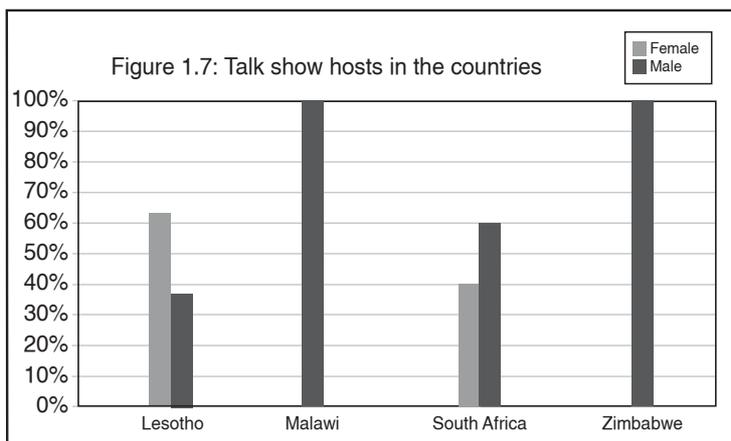
Figure 1.5 illustrates the preferred topics of female and figure 1.6 of male listeners in all countries. Women in all countries have a higher preference for topics related to gender equality and women’s empowerment. South African women (29%) have the highest preference for this topic compared to only 6% of men.

Lesotho women prefer current affairs and social issues slightly more than their male counterparts who prefer business and economic issues more than women. The most preferred topics for Malawian women are entertainment followed by current affairs. The reverse is true for men in Malawi who prefer current affairs followed by entertainment. Malawian men have no interest talking about gender equality and women’s empowerment issues whilst women listeners interviewed were not interested in sports and business. Zimbabwean women and men both rate social issues as their most preferred topic.



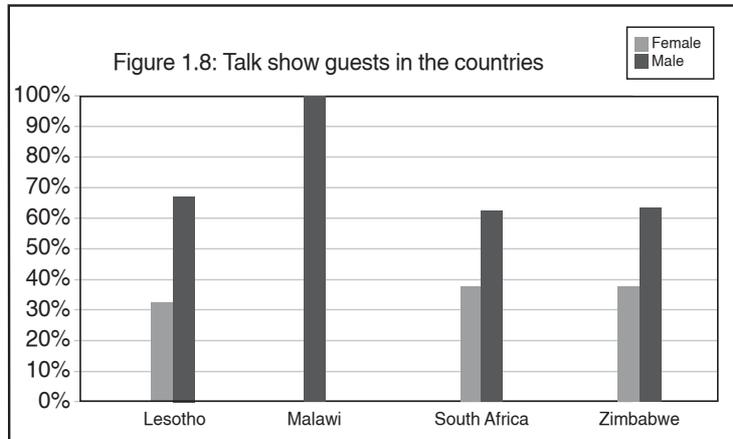
Hosts

On average, women constituted 32% of all the talk show hosts. But, as illustrated in figure 1.7, this average figure masks important differences between countries. Lesotho had the highest representation of women as talk show hosts with women (62%) outnumbering male hosts (38%). In South Africa 40% of the hosts were women. Malawi and Zimbabwe had no female hosts on any of the shows monitored.



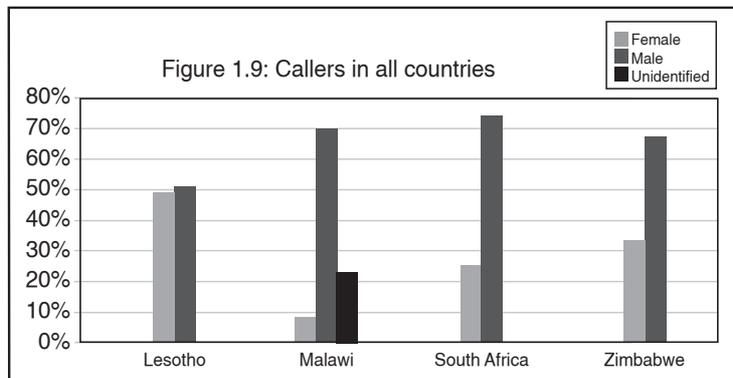
Guests

Women made up only 36% of talk show guests. As illustrated in figure 1.8, in South Africa and Zimbabwe women made up 39 percent of all guests called to the shows. Lesotho had slightly fewer (33%) female guests and Malawi had no female guests at all.



Callers

Overall women only make up 25 % of all callers to radio talk shows. But, as illustrated in figure 1.9, there are significant country differences with women callers constituting 49% of the total in Lesotho; 33% in Zimbabwe; 25% in South Africa and a mere 8% in Malawi.



Talk show listeners were asked the question: *Would talk shows be more interesting if more women called in, or if more men called in or does it make no difference?*

Overall, the majority (62%) of listeners interviewed said that it makes no difference to talk shows whether women or men call in. Some 30% of Lesotho and South African listeners said that talk shows would be more interesting if more women called. Some 30% of Lesotho and Malawian listeners believe that talk shows would be more interesting if more men called in.

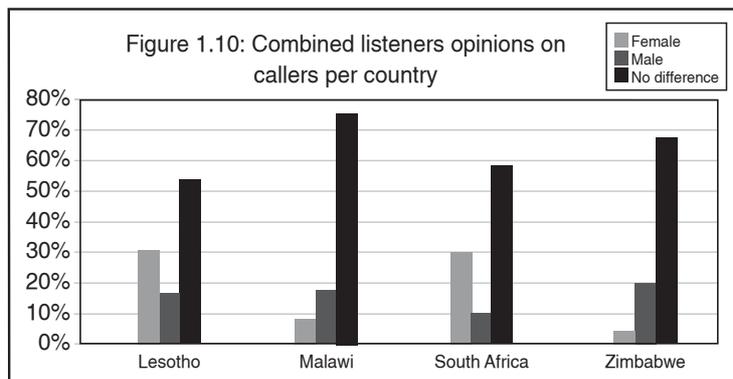
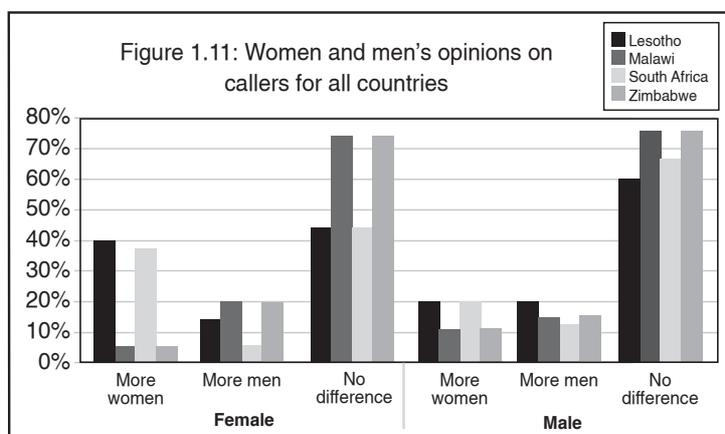


Figure 1.11 shows that there were no major differences between the views of women and men on this question although overall a slightly lower percentage of women (60%) than men (67%) thought it would make no difference whether more women or men called in.



What is said on the programmes

The qualitative monitoring and audience survey showed that in some cases hosts challenged callers on their views which resulted in further debate. Shows that had better gender balance in guests and callers reflected a greater diversity of views and richer debate.

However, most of the hosts did not identify and integrate gender issues into their shows or challenge gender stereotypes.

For example in a discussion on orphans and vulnerable children on the 'Day of the African Child' in Malawi, one male caller blamed "cruel" women for the plight of these children, without citing any evidence to that effect. The host did not challenge the statement or encourage debate.

In Lesotho a host failed to challenge a guest and callers on their views on "how women should behave" and allowed discriminatory comments on people living with HIV/AIDS to pass without challenge. A talk show host also failed to challenge the view that women are "over emotional" and "cannot be associated with reason and calmness."

A host on the *Taba Kgoro* show asked a female caller whether she understood political issues, a question he did not pose to any of his male callers. In Zimbabwe a host on the *Youth Forum* show allowed a discussion on fashion to degenerate into an attack on girls and the way they dress and how this affects men.

Hosts often missed the opportunity to raise interesting gender debates. For example in South Africa a programme on male grooming did not explore some of the underlying issues like male socialisation.

Gender issues pervade every topic and area of our lives. With greater awareness, radio talk show hosts could use this space to raise pertinent debates as well as challenge attitudes that reinforce gender stereotypes.