

Radio talk show monitor in Zimbabwe.
Photo:Loveness Jambaya

Chapter Five Zimbabwe

5

This section of the report summarises the Zimbabwe findings of the *Mirror on the Media* radio talk show monitoring project conducted in four countries (Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Malawi and South Africa.) Media monitored in Zimbabwe included *Chakafukidza dzimba matenga* on Radio Zimbabwe which covers social issues and Spot FM's *Youth forum* broadcast. The monitoring covered five shows between June and August 2005 for each station. It included quantitative and qualitative analysis of the shows monitored as well as interviews held with both radio show hosts and listeners. The methodology and tools used are attached at **Annexes 1-3**.

Key findings

Women are under-represented in all areas of talk shows: As in Malawi, all of the hosts on the Zimbabwe programme during the period monitored were men. Women comprised 39% of the guests, slightly above the overall average of 36%. However, this varied from equal numbers of male and female guests in *Chakafukidza dzimba matenga* to 73% male guests and 27% female guests on *Youth Forum*.

Zimbabwe had 33% women callers; higher than the overall average of 25%. But this varied from 18% on *Chakafukidza dzimba matenga* to 45% on *Youth forum*, which is broadcast in English and attracts the more urban, affluent population. Hosts did not make any special effort to encourage more women to call in.

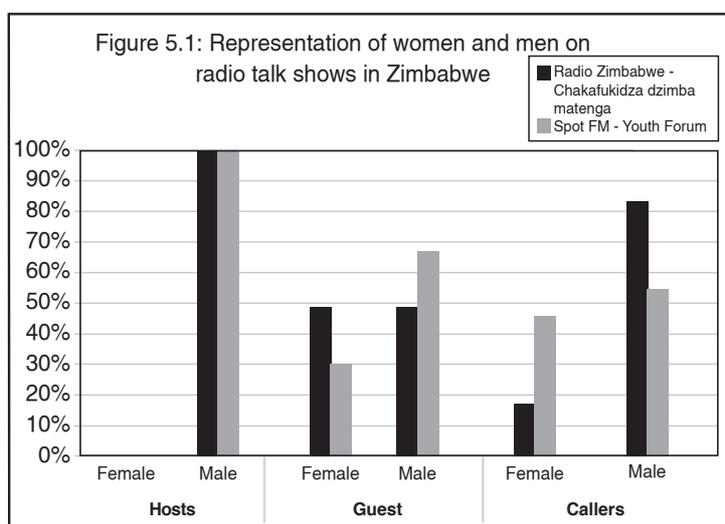
Social issues dominate: Social issues (90%) dominated both shows. The remaining 10% of topics related to entertainment. Youth forum did not feature any gender specific topics, but these constituted 54% of the debates on *Chakafukidza dzimba matenga*. Topics ranged from polygamy, to health problems, to relationships to witchcraft. Most of these highlighted gender dynamics.

What listeners want to talk about: Both women (75%) and men (50%) had a strong preference for programmes on social issues, including health, HIV/AIDS and education. Only men (20%) want to talk about sports. Both women (10%) and men (20%) want to talk about current affairs. More women (10%) than men (5%) want to talk about gender equality.

It makes no difference whether more women call in to talk shows: A large percentage of all listeners interviewed believe that it makes no difference to talk shows whether it's women or men calling in.

Stereotypes are not challenged: The qualitative monitoring yielded examples of gender stereotypes going unchallenged in many instances. These included views on the way women dress and whether women should be allowed to inherit.

But gender balance brings fresh views and debate: Having women and men on panels, especially in *Chakafukidza*



dzimba matenga which featured gender-specific debates, opened the floor to more stimulating debates. For example in a discussion on marriage, two guests, a woman and a man, set the lines abuzz with their differing views on whether girls should finish their studies or fear “not finding a husband”.

Background and Context

The Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) monopolises the airwaves in Zimbabwe; there are no private or community broadcasters.

The ZBC runs four radio stations: Spot FM (Bulawayo), Power FM (Gweru), National FM (Harare) and Radio Zimbabwe (Harare). It also runs the only television station in the country, Zimbabwe Television (ZTV). There are plans to introduce a regional television station to broadcast in local languages from Bulawayo called National Television (NTV).

The four radio stations and national television are tightly controlled. The government thwarted an attempt to start a community radio station in 2000. In 2004 the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ), the broadcasting regulator, advertised one license for one national free-to-air commercial broadcaster and 14 private broadcasters (but no community broadcasters). BAZ is yet to issue any licenses.

Gender and Media in Zimbabwe

The 2002 Gender and Media Baseline Study (GMBS) found that women constituted 15% of news sources in Zimbabwe, compared to the regional average of 17%. Snapshot surveys carried out after that show that the situation has not changed much though a little progress is being made.

The Gender and Media Audience Study (GMAS), found that a relatively high proportion of Zimbabwean women (21%) compared to men (17%) cited news that asks for feedback like letters to editors and talk shows as amongst their favourite genre. This shows that women are interested in engaging with the media. More women (36%) than men (33%) cited radio as their most important source of news.

Radio Talk shows

The four radio stations in Zimbabwe appeal to different audiences. Power FM and Spot FM broadcast in English and mostly attract the urban and more affluent population with the former mainly listened to by urban youth. The other two, Radio Zimbabwe and National FM, are more popular with the lower income group and rural population. Radio Zimbabwe broadcasts in the main national languages - Shona and Ndebele. National FM broadcasts in the 14 minority vernacular languages.

As a result of the volatile political environment, there are fewer talk shows now on most radio stations than in the past. Power FM has become a strictly music station with no current affairs programmes or talks shows. During the run up to the March 2005 general elections Spot FM took off most of its current affairs programmes, which used to have call in segments which included *AM Chat*, *The Big question* and *In Focus*, amongst others.

Reasons cited for the withdrawal of the talk shows is the insistence by caller on talking about the political and economic

problems bedeviling the country and lack of resources. The few remaining talk shows on the station include: *Youth forum*, *Natures Finest* (women's health programme) and *BP*, a Sunday sports call in programme. There are indications from Spot FM that some programmes may be re-introduced but no timeframes have been given.

Radio Zimbabwe and National FM still hold a sizeable number of talk shows. This is possible because Radio Zimbabwe, in particular has resources to finance hosts, guests, artists and so on. The comparative advantage lies in that the station broadcasts in the two main indigenous languages and therefore commands the widest listenership in the country. This in turn attracts more advertisers (ZAMPS, 2004).

The talk shows are varied in nature and are sometimes political but they remain controlled. A programme that invited much heated political debate was recently taken off air. This demonstrates that women and men in Zimbabwe have limited channels to speak freely. This is tantamount to suppressing freedom of expression.

Key events during the monitoring period

- Operation restore order/ Murambatsvina.

Media Monitored

Spot FM – Youth forum

Youth forum is broadcast in English. It attracts mainly the urban and more affluent population. Both young and older people listen to the station unlike Power FM that attracts the youths and young adults more than it does older people. The show focuses on predominantly social issues.

Date	Time	Topic
30 June 2005	15:05-16:00	Fashion
7 July 2005	15:05-16:00	Youth Entertainment
28 July 2005	15:05-16:00	Roles models
4 August 2005	15:05-16:00	Roles models
11 August 2005	15:05-16:00	Religion - Salvation Army youth camp

Radio Zimbabwe - Chakafukidza dzimba matenga

Radio Zimbabwe is broadcast in the two major indigenous languages, Shona and Ndebele. Both young and old people listen to it, particularly the illiterate, lower income groups as well as the rural population. It hosts a number of talk shows on social and current issues. These range from family relationships, politics, health, sports, education etc.

Chakafukidza dzimba matenga 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 programme is broadcast in Shona. This is a call in show where the host and guests respond to letters that have been written by listeners who are seeking help in their personal lives.

According to the hosts of the show responding to letters is a way of accommodating the marginalised who do not have access to telephones. Callers are then invited to call in and give advice and respond to the letter writers, although in some instances there is no time to take calls and the show is dominated by the host and guests' advice.

Date	Time	Topic
21 June 2005	21:00-22:00	Medical & family relationships
28 June 2005	21:00-22:00	Social issues
5 July 2005	21:00-22:00	Impotence, polygamy, inheritance
23 August 2005	21:00-22:00	Witchcraft, polygamy, relationships
30 August 2005	21:00-22:00	Marriage, health

Findings

Topics

On both of the shows monitored, Radio Zimbabwe's *Chakafukidza dzimba matenga* and Spot FM's *Youth forum*, social issues dominated the discussions with entertainment being the only other category discussed, as illustrated in figure 5.2.

Chakafukidza dzimba matenga talk show on Radio Zimbabwe discussed social issues, mainly based on personal experiences. Of the 13 topics monitored, seven (54%) focused specifically on gender issues.

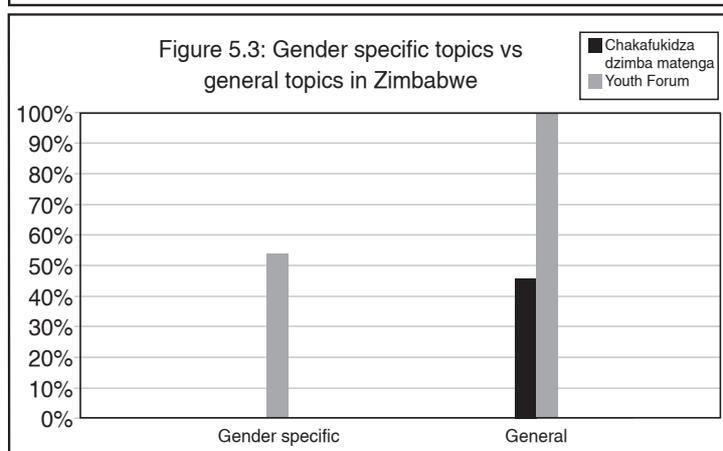
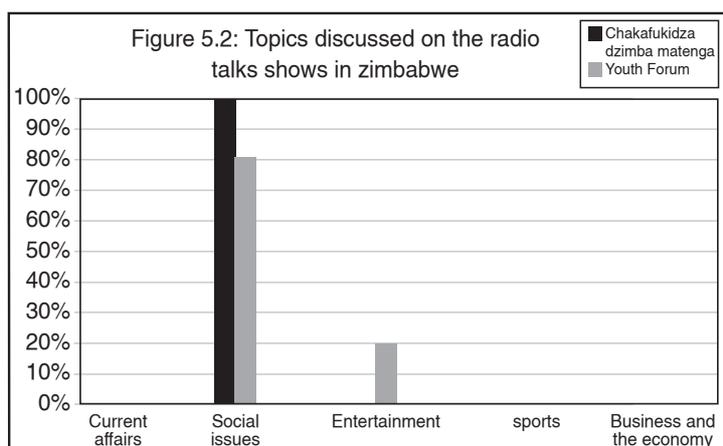
Spot FM's *Youth forum* discussed a wide range of social issues (80%) but also held discussions on entertainment (20%). All five shows monitored discussed general topics but on some occasions brought out gender dimensions, these included fashion, role models, entertainment and religion.

Who chooses the topics?

On *Chakafukidza dzimba matenga* the host and guests discuss issues and problems raised in letters written by listeners. When interviewed the host/producer of *Chakafukidza dzimba matenga* revealed that while they try to integrate gender into some of the topics, they mainly rely on letters, newspapers and radio programmes.

What listeners want to talk about

The findings of the listeners surveyed indicate that the most preferred topic for the majority of listeners, both women (75%) and men (50%), to both shows, are social issues, including health, HIV/AIDS and education. This is in line with the actual topics discussed on the predominantly socially oriented shows.



The *Chakafukidza dzimba matenga* listeners showed a broader range of preferences. A small number of women (10%) and men (10%) want to hear more entertainment talk shows. More men (30%) want to discuss current affairs than women (10%).

More women listeners to both shows want to listen to and discuss social issues. Only men (20%) want to listen to sport talk shows. This finding is similar to that found in the GMAS which showed that women are most interested in news topics relating to social issues including health, HIV/AIDS and education whilst men were most interested in sports and political stories.

Men who listen to *Chakafukidza dzimba matenga* don't want to discuss gender equality whilst equal numbers of male and female listeners to the Youth forum want to talk about gender equality. No listeners to either of the shows want to listen to talk shows on business and the economy.

Hosts

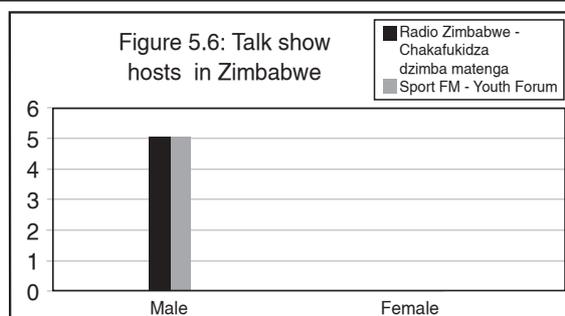
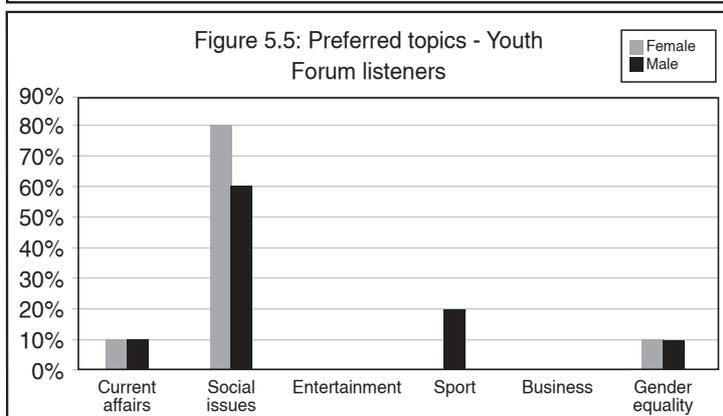
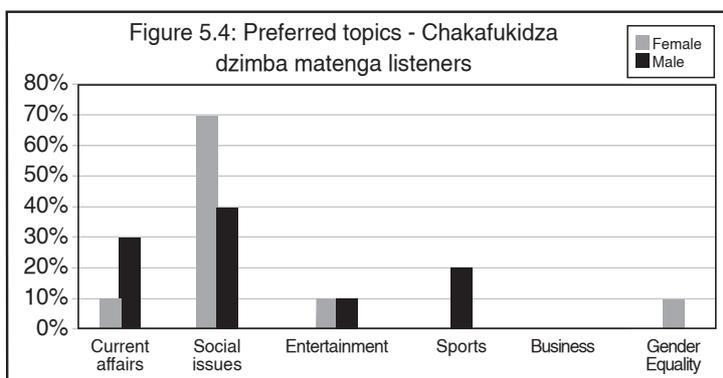
During the monitoring period men hosted both shows.

The majority of listeners to both shows (60% of *Chakafukidza dzimba matenga* and 77% of *Youth forum* listeners) believe that the hosts encourage callers to speak their mind.

Neutral and fair most of the time, the Radio Zimbabwe host sometimes got carried away and made fun of callers or letter writers. For example he made fun of an 18-year-old boy whose father wrote to ask for advice on his bad odour condition. The talk show host said: "Even witches would not feed on him because of the bad odour". The presenter also tended to give men more time than women. For example during the discussion on polygamous marriages male guests responded to most of the questions.

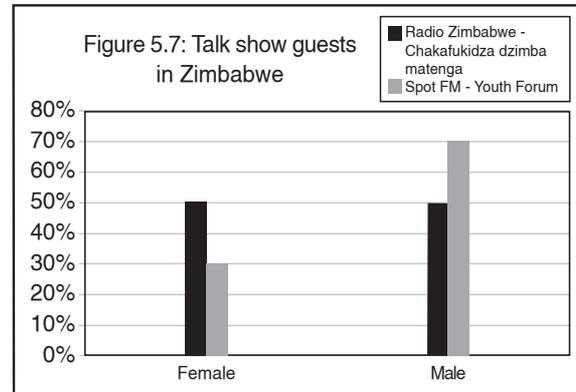
The Spot FM host showed an awareness of, but little sensitivity towards, gender issues. For instance, during the July 30 talk show on fashion trends, the presenter allowed the debate to degenerate into an attack on how the "girls of today" dress and how this affects men.

Neither host made a conscious effort to achieve a gender balance of callers during their programmes. The host of *Chakafukidza dzimba matenga* felt it did not matter whether more women or more men called in. The host of *Youth forum* addressed listeners as 'guys' which may have discouraged women from calling in.



Guests

Chakafukidza dzimba matenga had equal numbers of female and male guests. The host/producer of the programme said he aimed to have some permanent guests for continuity of the programme. Although the host felt that it is “not always necessary” to have a gender balance of guests, he said he sometimes consciously strives to achieve this when there are two guests on the same show. He said he never had problems getting female guests on the show and sometimes had to turn down offers by women who wanted to participate as guests.

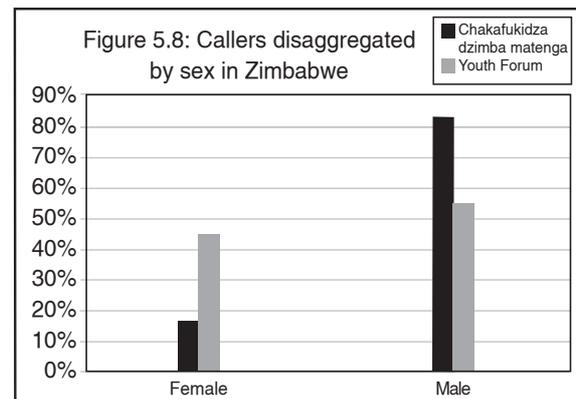


In contrast, male guests (69%) dominated the Youth forum. On one occasion a female panellist sat as an observer throughout the show and did not contribute to the debate at all.

Callers

Women made up 33% of all callers to both talk shows during the period monitored. Spot FM’s Youth forum (45% women callers) performed better than Radio Zimbabwe’s *Chakafukidza dzimba matenga* (18% women callers).

Of the five programmes monitored on *Chakafukidza dzimba matenga*, only two had people calling in. However, the host read letters written by both men (54%) and women (46%). Ironically, most women (70%) and men (80%) who listen to *Chakafukidza dzimba matenga* believe that more women call in to the show.



Women who listen to Youth forum were divided in their opinion of who they thought called in to the show. Half thought more women called and half believed more men did. Most of the men interviewed (70%) thought more men call into the show.

The producer and host of *Chakafukidza dzimba matenga* was aware that a sizeable number of males call and write to this programme. When asked whether he would want to achieve greater gender balance among his listeners he said:

“That is nothing I would lose sleep over as a sizeable number of men listen to the programme. 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.”

Listeners of the two talk shows were asked the question – *Would talk shows be more interesting if more women called in, more men called in or it makes no difference?*

The majority of listeners, women and men, of both shows are of the opinion that it makes no difference to radio talk shows whether more women or men call in.

Ten% of *Chakafukidza dzimba matenga* female listeners believe that talk shows would be more interesting if more women called in. More women believe that more male callers would make the shows more interesting.

More men (20%) compared with no women who listen to Youth forum believe that talk shows would be more interesting if more women called in. 10% of men and women think that more men would make talk shows more interesting.

These finding are in sharp contrast to the GMAS where a high proportion of women in Zimbabwe (64%) said that they would find the news more interesting if the ideas and views of women were reported more often.

What was said in the programmes

From some of the topics discussed and responses from hosts, guests and callers it is clear that there are still gender prejudices within the society and that these are often reinforced in radio talk shows. A host on a *Youth forum* show allowed a discussion on fashion to degenerate into an attack on girls and the way they dress with comments such as: “The problem is young girls of today get into this controversial idea of dressing”. It became a debate about how girls dress and how this affects men.

On Radio Zimbabwe the responses to gender specific issues often reinforced stereotypes. For example in a case concerning a woman having problems with inheriting her mother’s estate, the guests suggested that the brother, not the woman and her sister mentioned in the mother’s will, should inherit the property.

During a discussion on dating some callers expressed the view that it is only women who are associated with beauty and grooming. They dismissed the concerns of a 24-year-old man who thought he could not find a girlfriend despite regarding himself as handsome and presentable. However, having gender balance on the panels often helped to bring different perspectives and to enrich the debate. A discussion on marriage on *Chakafukidza dzimba matenga* prompted debate when the female guest commended a girl caller for not indulging in sex at an early age and continuing with her education. She encouraged girls to find ways of complimenting government efforts to uplift the lives of women and girl children through affirmative action.

The male guest asked whether the girl wouldn’t be too old to get married by the time she finished school if she went on to tertiary school. The female guest challenged this traditional belief by drawing from her own personal experience and reiterating that education is essential for girls and that they should wait until they have completed their studies before they get married.

