Media Watch

Caption

Photo: Gender Links
Working the City: experiences of migrant women in inner-city Johannesburg
Jo Vearey, Elsa Oliveira, Tambudzai Madzimure and Bekie Ntini

Abstract
In October 2010, an exhibition entitled “Working the City: experiences of migrant women in inner-city Johannesburg” was held at the Market Photo Workshop (MPW) in Johannesburg. The month-long exhibition was the culmination of a participatory photography project which involved collaboration between Sisonke Sex Worker Movement, the MPW and the African Centre for Migration and Society (ACMS) at Wits University. The project worked with eleven migrant women involved in sex work in Johannesburg inner-city. The women were trained in basic photography and editing skills. Under the mentorship of students from the MPW, the women created posters that displayed their photo stories, captions and narratives of their experiences. This project contributes to an ongoing body of research that is being undertaken with women involved in sex work in inner-city Johannesburg. In this article we share some of the images selected and displayed at the exhibition, along with the accompanying captions that were written by the photographers. We hope that this visual project will contribute to an increasing body of knowledge relating to the experiences of migrant women involved in sex work and how they represent themselves, perceive and experience the city. Importantly, we see this methodology as a way of ensuring that the voices of urban populations are heard, with the aim being to influence policy and programmatic responses to address the needs of inner-city residents.

Background/introduction
Inner-city Johannesburg is home to a range of migrant groups, including individuals who have moved from elsewhere within South Africa, as well as those who have crossed borders (UNOCHA & FMSP 2009).

Whilst some have been forced to migrate in order to escape civil war, conflict or political unrest, the majority move in order to seek improved livelihood opportunities, often to support themselves and their
families who remain “back home” (for example, see Vearey et al., 2010). Migration therefore presents a key livelihood strategy for many poor households within the southern African region, and Johannesburg is a destination for many searching for employment opportunities. Many migrants in inner-city Johannesburg engage in informal livelihood activities, including sex work (for example, see Wills 2009).

Whilst approximately equal numbers of men and women are found to be engaged in informal activities, informal employment has been shown to represent a larger share of total employment among women compared to men. Sex work is currently a crime in South Africa and considered to be an informal, albeit “illegal” livelihood activity. Whilst there has been limited research on sex work in South Africa, it is clear that sex workers in inner-city Johannesburg experience difficult, unhealthy, unsafe – and often violent – working and living conditions (Richter, et al. 2010; Flak 2011; Oliveira 2011).

Urban health and development practitioners need to create appropriate responses to the urban populations that they serve (Vearey 2010). Often, urban groups that are considered “hard-to-reach” are omitted from participatory planning processes, resulting in urban interventions that fail to meet the needs of such groups; this includes both urban migrant and sex work populations. In order to better understand the experiences of migrant women involved in sex work in inner-city Johannesburg, a ten-day participatory photography workshop was undertaken in collaboration between Sisonke Sex Worker Movement\(^1\), Market Photo Workshop (MPW)\(^2\) and

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\(^1\) Sisonke Sex Worker Movement

\(^2\) Market Photo Workshop

Sex workers demand rights not rescue. I took this photo as I felt that most sex workers are being discriminated against and some people want to feel ashamed as if sex work is out of this world

Photo: Constance
the African Centre for Migration and Society (ACMS) at Wits University.

The MPW’s Photojournalism and Documentary Photography (PDP) students have been involved in a range of participatory photo projects with different urban populations in Johannesburg. Partnering with the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), several of these projects have explored various aspects of city-living, including how urban residents engage with – and navigate – the city. Exploring the experiences of urban residents in a participatory, visual way has been shown to bring different urban realities to the attention of a wide range of urban stakeholders, including researchers, public health programmers and city officials. Building on from these previous experiences, this project worked with migrant women involved in sex work in inner-city Johannesburg. The project took place within the inner-city suburb of Hillbrow in August 2010 (Women’s Month), culminating in a public exhibition held at the MPW Gallery in October 2010.

**Seeing the City**

The eleven women created a range of photo stories, accompanied by captions and narratives that visualise –

Before I was raped in 1998, the guy beat me up. I chose to recreate the scene in this picture as a way of trying to highlight the abuses that sex workers go through as they work to fend for themselves and provide for their families.
and describe – their experiences of inner-city Johannesburg. The images and stories presented by the women highlight the challenges faced by the women; as women, as migrants, as sex workers. A wide range of experiences were shared; the participants addressed areas of stigma relating to their work, structural violence, abuse, coping strategies, migration histories, and trajectories into sex work that were relevant to them, and the urban space in which they live and work.

The women focussed on their migration histories, their journeys to Johannesburg, and their linkages to home, where family – often including their children – remained. Sex work was presented as work, a livelihood activity that enabled money to be sent home to support family members. For

“When I tell my story I am telling my story with my photo. Like when I was telling the story of how people are trying to rob me, I can show the picture of the place and inside me I know that story. I can tell it or not. But to me I am telling my story. This is important. And I like it because it is too important for me to do this.”

Thembile

Some of the places in Hillbrow are a dirty place as there is rubbish all over the streets. And it’s unhealthy for children and everyone who lives there.
Some of the women, home was elsewhere in South Africa, and for others home is in Zimbabwe. Only one woman reported that her family back home knows of her work in the sex industry, the others tell their families that they work as beauticians or domestic workers.

Violence – in various forms – was a predominant theme relating to life in Johannesburg. Intimidation and violence from the police, from security guards working at the hotels and from clients were common stories shared by all the women.

The inner-city was predominantly shown by the women as a place that is dirty, unsafe and overcrowded. Some of the women also chose to present images and captions that highlighted the city as a place that is their home, with parks and open space for families and children to socialise.

Some of the women shared stories relating to their work as peer educators, and their involvement in HIV prevention activities and the promotion of HIV testing amongst their co-workers. One participant is living with HIV and her story focussed on the importance of accessing treatment, and how this enables her to stay healthy and working. All of the women stressed the importance of safe sex and their insistence on the use of condoms. However, it was clear from the stories shared, that negotiating condom use with clients is not always easy.

In Hillbrow, people are constantly moving in or moving out. People always have lots of luggage and it reminds me of when I have to send goods to my family back in Zimbabwe.
The way forward

The project has – we believe – successfully enabled the experiences of migrant women involved in sex work in inner-city Johannesburg to be shared. Exploring the experiences of urban residents in a participatory, visual way can bring different urban realities to the attention of a wide range of urban stakeholders (Vearey 2010; Oliveira 2011). Through various public forums and outreach, the images and accompanying captions and narratives are being used to engage with multiple urban actors, including: researchers; city officials and decision makers; health and development practitioners; migration policy makers; and, those campaigning for urban health equity and social justice. This project can serve as an example of how to conduct research amidst areas that are considered “invisible” or “too dangerous” by urban practitioners and city officials. Importantly, the women who participated in the project described their experiences as positive, describing the opportunity to tell their story as valuable and helpful.

“Sometimes things happen and they eat you your whole life. This project helped me to think about my story, my life and now I get to talk with you and it’s a good thing. People are too stressed because they never get to tell their story. They have this and that that is hard in their lives and no one knows.”

Confidence

We hope that individuals engaging with the images and accompanying narratives consider the stories that the women have shared and, where possible, encourage positive action to be taken to improve the context of sex work for urban migrant women. The participating women clearly show that – for them – sex work is work, a viable livelihood activity that enables them to support themselves and their families back home. However, the current context in which sex work is conducted places these migrant women at risk of violence, intimidation and HIV. Importantly, the stories presented contribute to the growing body of research on sex work in South Africa, and add to the evidence that highlights the need for sex work reform.

References:

© Writers Bio
Jo Vearey and Elsa Oliveira are with the African Centre for Migration and Society, University of the Witwatersrand, Tambudzai Madzimure and Bekie Ntini are with the Market Photo Workshop.
Mobilising men all over the country to join in and Support each other: A brother for life
By Kristin Palitza

Abstract
Brothers for Life is a National Campaign targeting men over the age of 30. The initiative has been initiated by Johns Hopkins Health and Education in South Africa (JHHESA), Sonke Gender Justice (Sonke), South African National Aids Council (SANAC) and other key stakeholders. It is aimed at addressing the risks associated with having multiple and concurrent partnerships, men’s limited involvement in fatherhood, lack of knowledge of HIV status by many, low levels of testing and disclosure, and insufficient health seeking behaviours in general.

Focusing on the positive
South African women and girls face some of the highest levels of violence in the world. 1 in every 4 South African men admits to have raped a woman. That’s bad news – but the good news is that 3 out of 4 South African men have not been violent.

Undeniably, it is men who commit the majority of acts of domestic and sexual violence. But many men and boys are strongly opposed to this violence and feel it has no place in a democratic South Africa.

At the same time, there is a growing understanding among men that they have a critical role to play in addressing the gender norms, roles and relations underlying the HIV pandemic. Men are starting to recognise the vital role they can play in improving their own health and the health of their families.

A national men’s campaign, called Brothers for Life, is now encouraging them to stand up and show other men how to make the right choice. It mobilises men from all over the country to start working together to build a stronger and healthier society. It shows men how their choices can either help or harm their health – and how these choices can then help or harm their community and country.

The five-year campaign was launched by Johns Hopkins Health and Education in South Africa (JHHESA), the Sonke Gender Justice Network (Sonke), the South African Department of Health (DoH), the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC) and other key stakeholders in the country.

“Brother” is a word that resonates among men across South Africa – no matter what language they speak – “mfowethu.” “bra,” “broer” or “bru.” Brothers for Life capitalises on this and intends to wants strengthen the sense of brotherhood among men and encourage them to reach out to each other. The
campaign encourages them to support each other to project their own and women’s health and well-being.

“The campaign is based on the theory of positive normativity. Instead of focusing on what’s wrong, Brothers for Life builds on the positive,” explains Richard Delate, country programme director for communications at Johns Hopkins Health Education in South Africa (JHEESA), the strategy behind the campaign.

“If you focus on the negative, you create a sense that what is wrong is normal, and that can make people feel fatalistic,” he adds. “The Brothers for Life approach wants to engage those who are already positive examples and turn them into role models.”

For example, the often-quoted statistic that 30% of South African men are violent could be interpreted in a way that highlights the fact that 70% of men are not. “We want to get those 70% to take responsibility, stand up and proudly talk about what they are doing right,” says Delate.

Men are central to preventing violence against women. More and more South African men are choosing kindness over cruelty and harmony over hostility. They have realised that an equal, respectful relationship with a woman is far more satisfying than one rooted in domination and violence. “If we want to induce change, we need to talk about the norms and values that underlie society. People are embedded within systems that inform their behaviour,” explains Delate.

Brothers for Life provides men with knowledge, skills and tools to contribute to a just and democratic South Africa in which men and women alike have access to health and dignity. The campaign asserts unapologetically that every man in South Africa has
a choice. Either he can choose to abuse the women in his life physically and emotionally. Or he can choose to protect their health and wellbeing – and his own.

"Men have to be partners. If you don’t involve men, the struggle against HIV and gender inequality will be futile,” says Sonke deputy director Desmond Lesejane. “Right now, there are not many programmes and services for men above 30, yet male HIV prevalence peaks between the ages of 30 and 39.”

Health and HIV are a critical focus of the campaign, because men have a critical role to play in addressing the gender norms, roles and relations underlying the HIV/AIDS pandemic. To achieve this, the USAID and PEPFAR-funded campaign will address the risks associated with having multiple and concurrent partnerships, men’s limited involvement in fatherhood and in meeting the needs of orphans and vulnerable children, low levels of HIV testing and disclosure, condom usage, male sexual and reproductive health, including circumcision, and male involvement in pregnancy.

The campaign consists of four main components – awareness raising through South African mass media, community mobilisation through local organisations that work with men, advocacy for more and better services for men, and a fact-packed men’s health toolkit to help men and boys take action.

Launching the campaign

Until very recently, most efforts to involve men in responding to HIV and AIDS have been limited in scale and impact. Brothers for Life wants to change this.

The campaign positions itself within the policy framework of the South African Department of Health’s (DoH) National Strategic Plan 2007-2011, which recognises the need for a concerted effort around male sexual and reproductive health, and hopes to contribute to the national policy around male circumcision, which is currently being developed by the DoH and SANAC.

The Brothers for Life campaign was launched on 29 August 2009 in KwaMashu, a township outside of Durban in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), South Africa’s province with the highest HIV infection rate. More than 10,000 men and women from in and around the area attended the event – a clear sign of the need for a national men’s health campaign.

"The responses from people were amazing that day. Many said the campaign is something positive, something they have been waiting for,” says Sonke One Man Can (OMC) national manager Nyanda Khanyile. “Lots of men came to us during the launch to tell us they want to get involved and asked what they can do.”

Khanyile points out that many South African men over the age of 30 have previously not been directly addressed by HIV and gender equality campaigns, which are mostly targeted at youth. “Now they have something that speaks to them, that they can identify with.”

Numerous national and local government officials have announced their support of Brothers for Life. South African deputy president Kgalema Motlanthe, deputy health minister Dr Molefi Sefularo, DoH director general Thami Mseleku and SANAC deputy chair Mark Heywood gave speeches during the launch, in which they pledged to provide their assistance. The speeches were broadcast live by Ukhozi FM, an isiZulu radio station with more than five million listeners.

“When the speakers pledged that they will be a brother for life during the launch, they made the campaign part of the national debate,” believes Khanyile. The provincial governments of the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal committed to actively support the roll out of the campaign, while and various international aid organisations, including UNAIDS, UNAID, UNICEF and UNIFEM, promised to back Brothers for Life.
The campaign also found active support from both SANAC’s men’s and women’s sector, which noted that, for far too long, issues of sexual and reproductive health have been directed at mainly at women. “Because there are hardly any health services that are particularly targeted at men, most men take little care of their own and their family’s health,” says SANAC men’s sector chair Bob Phato.

“We hope the campaign will change men’s mentality by mobilising men all over the country to join in and support each other.” SANAC stressed the importance of the campaign to encourage men to actively take up the challenge of curbing the rate of new HIV infections, by understanding their own bodies, having safe sex, treating Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), testing for HIV, planning pregnancy, supporting their partner through pregnancy and being responsible parents.

“Currently men are not visible. Both men and women need to be educated about health-related issues and both need to seek health care services. That’s the sign of an equal relationship,” explains SANAC women’s section chair Nomfundo Eland.

She believes the Brothers for Life campaign is an important vehicle to involve men throughout the country to pay more attention to health and become aware of gender inequalities: “Men need to reach out to other men to mentor each other to grow a generation of men who don’t abuse and who take responsibility.”

The campaign has also been endorsed by well-known South African actor and playwright John Kani, who called Brothers for Life “the most important statement to make in South Africa today.”

A key indicator for people’s early commitment to Brothers for Life was the fact that more than 400 people decided to test for HIV that day – the majority of whom were men. “This was an amazing achievement. We were very impressed,” says JHEESA programme manager, communications, Mandla Ndlovu.

**Research and strategy development**

Much thought, planning and research has gone into developing the Brothers for Life messages and approach. The campaign is based on the recognition that an individual’s decisions are influenced by his or her social networks, communities (including traditional and spiritual leaders) and the broader political and societal environment. Those can either facilitate or impede change, explains Delate.

Research was conducted between October 2008 and February 2009, including a literature review by Sonke, qualitative research to understand men as an audience by JHHESA, Futures Group and others, as well as research on behavioural drivers of HIV on community level by Health Development Africa (HDA) in four high HIV prevalence districts – Lejweleputswa (Free State); Bojanala (North West); Ethekwini (KZN) and Merafong (Gauteng).
Background information was also provided by research with taxi operators and commuters in a high transit area in Gauteng and KZN and conversations with traditional health practitioners in KZN on constructions of masculinity and male circumcision.

A 2008 Consensus Building Meeting, which was attended by 30 major stakeholders, including JHHESA, Sonke, SANAC, DoH, Perinatal Health and Research Unit (PHRU), JPHIEGO further informed the campaign strategy.

Sonke’s literature review on men, gender, health, HIV and AIDS in South Africa shows that although much good work has been done to engage men in efforts to reduce gender inequality, most programmes have been small in scale and have limited sustainability. Most focused on running workshops and community education events. Rare exceptions, like Soul City in South Africa, have been national in scale or reached large numbers of men. The findings indicate that there is potential for far deeper and more wide-ranging change if existing efforts are scaled up and replicated in more sites.

The review also found that those campaigns that have achieved results so far have shown that many men are willing to help promote gender equality and that this can improve both women’s and men’s health. This suggests that men need to be brought on board to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS and enhance the physical and psychological health of all people.

In addition to this, the surveys conducted by HDA gave important insights into how to work with communities on HIV-related issues. The findings were used to develop advocacy messages, activities, interventions and targets against which community changes can be measured over time.
The survey showed, for example, that there is a consistent proportion (about 14%) of men who feel that they cannot be faithful to their partners. About 30% of men, but only 7% of women, said they had more than one partner in the past twelve months. Most people who had more than one sexual partner, had two partners (17%) in the preceding year, but 12% of men had more than two partners. Only 4% of men had four or more sexual partners in the last year.

About half of people who had multiple concurrent partnerships (MCP) described them as casual. Interestingly, the casual relationships were not once-off events, but rather 80% involved regular sexual relationships over a period of time.

“Unlike qualitative research, our study found that MCP was not considered normative or acceptable,” says HDA managing director Dr Saul Johnson. “MCP is not as common as people assume and masculinity is not necessarily defined by the number of partners. Brothers for Life can build on that.”

There is, however, a consistent and quite large minority of people who have more than one partner, and the challenge for the Brothers for Life campaign will be in engaging these individuals with messages that encourage them to use condoms correctly and consistently and to reduce their total number of sexual partners.

The HDA study also found that, despite the fact that male circumcision rates are low in South Africa, there seems to be high acceptance of the benefits of male circumcision in the surveyed communities, which means that there could be wide-ranging acceptance of programmes promoting the practice.

“A receptive environment is a good starting point for the campaign. It shows that there is a willingness to receive the messages of Brothers for Life,” believes Johnson. Another important aspect that was highlighted by the survey was the strong link between high alcohol intake and HIV risk taking behaviour. Alcohol increases the risk of HIV infection due to the strong connection between alcohol use and high-risk sexual behaviour, such as having multiple sexual partners or failing to use a condom during sex.

Many South Africans, particularly men, are at risk because ideas of manhood put pressure on them to drink to keep up with their peers and show their masculinity, and worldwide, many more men than women fall sick or die because of alcohol-related diseases. “These important findings also informed the campaign,” explains Johnson.

Media awareness campaign

Under the motto “educating while entertaining,” key messages around men’s health, HIV testing, violence and abuse, drugs and alcohol, condom use, family planning, parenting and male circumcision have been developed for the Brothers for Life mass media campaign.

The campaign is aired on local television and radio stations and will be shown on various sports channels around the time of the 2010 Soccer World Cup. In addition, a drama series on local television and radio stations will promote responsible male behaviour, while district and community radio stations will broadcast talk shows on men’s health. So far, Brothers for Life television advertisements have been broadcast since the launch of the campaign on all four public television channels in South Africa (SABC1, SABC2, SABC3 and eTV) as well as on all local language and commercial stations of the SABC.

That South Africans have a keen interest to find out more about the campaign is shown by the fact that almost 6,000 people sms’ed ‘Please Call Me’ messages to the Brothers for Life sms line, and the campaign’s website, www.brothersforlife.org received 45,000 hits and had more than 1,000 unique visitors within the first week after its launch.

Young men and boys in South Africa grow up exposed...
to some of the highest levels of HIV, domestic violence and rape anywhere in the world. They also experience and witness high levels of violent crime. They hear many damaging messages about what it means to ‘be a man’ – including that they have to ‘be tough’, ‘be in control’, have lots of sexual partners – and that they must never ask for help. They need role models and be taught alternative ways of living.

“The media campaign reaches out to men with messages like ‘be responsible’, ‘respect your partner’, take care of your health’, ‘be a parent to your children’, to give just a few examples,” explains Lesejane. “It asks men to be a brother, to be there, show solidarity and connect.”

Within the first week of launching Brothers for Life, campaign staff gave eleven radio interviews in Xhosa, English, Setswana and Zulu, to a variety of stations, including: SAfm, Metro FM, East Coast Radio, Ukhozi FM, Gagazi FM, Umholobo Wenene, Heart, Kaya FM, Lesedi FM and Thobela, Motsweding).

Live reads took place on Metro FM’s Kevin Maistry Show and 5FM’s DJ Fresh Show, while East Coast Radio, 5FM and Metro FM put up information about the Brothers for Life campaign on their websites. SABC Morning Live and eTV Sunrise discussed Brothers for Life during their television programmes.

In addition, ten newspapers reported on the launch of the campaign, including Isolezwe, Citizen, Business Day, Daily News, Sunday World, Die Burger, Volksbald, Beeld, PlusNews, Health-e, Daily Sun and Sowetan.

Social mobilisation

To link the mass media campaign to community level initiatives, the social mobilisation component of the Brothers for Life campaign will be rolled out in five high HIV prevalence districts in South Africa, including Thabo Mofutsanyane in the Free State, Llembe and Zululand in KZN, Bojanala in North West and Ukhahlamba in the Eastern Cape. Later on, the social mobilisation programme will be expanded to 13 additional districts.

“The social mobilisation component is the interpersonal aspect of the campaign, which will be driven by men and women within communities,” explains Ndlovu the importance of grassroots involvement. “It’s based on the thinking that if you want to light a good fire, you light it from the bottom, not from the top.”

Instead of implementing an entirely new programme, Brothers for Life will collaborate with existing community-based organisations and piggyback on existing initiatives in the different districts. “We are planning to tap into forums that are already active, building on what is already there, so that we can roll out the campaign very broadly throughout the country,” says Ndlovu.

Sonke will develop training materials on key issues, such as men’s sexual and reproductive health, parenting, drug and alcohol abuse, violence against women, gender roles, HIV and STIs that can be used by different communities throughout the country.

“We will train trainers in existing community organisations who can pass on the messages,” says Lesejane. “That way, brothers will help each other to deal with issues.” This, he believes, will enable men to change the negative image of men as violators to a positive image of men as responsible citizens.

Key partner organisations in the five priority districts include Mothusimpilo, operating in Merafong, Gauteng, Lighthouse Foundation in Madibeng, North West, Lesedi Lechabile in Lejweleputswa, Free State, as well as The Turntable Trust and The Valley Trust in KwaZulu-Natal.

They will reach out to people through community gatherings, such as imbizos, entertainment, door-to-door mobilisation, sport events, activities in churches, community dialogues and events in
political wards. Apart from community organisations, activities will also target influential stakeholders, such as traditional leaders, religious leaders, taxi operators and tavern owners.

**Advocacy**

Part of the Brothers for Life advocacy component are community dialogues to engage people in conversation around the key drivers of the epidemic and to develop community action plans to respond to HIV/AIDS on community-level.

Most importantly, Brothers for Life advocates for the revision and strengthening of a men’s health framework within the national health policy, provision of male-friendly services in primary health care settings, as well as for health services specifically aimed at reducing the risk of new HIV infections.

Brothers for Life will work with service providers, particularly with the national health department, to improve health services for men and make them more patient-friendly. “We need better services for men. Otherwise we mobilise all these men, but they will still have nowhere to go to,” stresses Lesejane.

In addition, prominent traditional, political, religious and business leaders will be called upon to lead the advocacy component of the campaign and speak to their communities about social constructions of men and male responsibilities.

**Toolkit**

An in-depth men’s health toolkit has been developed to support the campaign. It addresses a wide variety of issues affecting men, including:
- Sex and Sexuality
- Constructs of masculinity
- Fatherhood, including communication, prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV (PMTCT), orphans and vulnerable children, etc.
- Voluntary counselling and testing (VCT), including couple counselling
- Risk behaviour
- STIs
- Prostate cancer
- Alcohol and substance abuse
- Gender-based violence

The toolkit is designed to be a reference guide – a ‘book of life’ that men can consult to learn more about men’s health, sexual health, healthy relationships, pregnancy, fatherhood and more. Men can also use the practical tools within this kit to spread the Brothers for Life philosophy to their friends, colleagues and communities.

It will be used to help Brothers for Life partners, organisations, community leaders, traditional leaders, religious leaders and other interested parties to spread the campaign messages.

Yenzakahle! Do the right thing!

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**Writers Bio**

Kristin Palitza has been working as a journalist and editor in South Africa, the US and Germany for the past 15 years. The focus of her work is on poverty, socio-politics, health/HIV, gender and environmental issues. She has written for a wide variety of publications, including the Mail & Guardian, The Weekender and Inter Press Service (IPS).
When Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was elected the first African female head of state she said her success represented a victory for women who have been working to improve their role in African society.

Five years since her ascendance to power one would have hoped that the Liberian leader had proven a woman’s role is not about serving a man. Alas, this is not the case if one looks at the way women continue to be portrayed in Zambian advertisements. It appears there is a systematic campaign to remind women their place is still in the kitchen.

The main culprits are advertisers of detergent powders and other cleaning products. One advert, currently airing on both national and private television, shows a man dragging his wife to the village chief and claiming that she doesn’t know how to do laundry.

“This woman does not know how to wash. And you know what that means to a man like me in this village,” the man says.

“So?” the chief asks.

“I need a divorce,” the man replies.

“There is no way in our tradition a woman can fail to wash. Young lady you are destroying your own home,” the chief responds, berating the young woman.

At this point the chief’s wife interjects on behalf of the young woman and introduces her to a new detergent which will solve all her problems. The couple lives happily ever after.

Another advert starts on a different note, showing a man doing laundry. I watched it the first time and though: “Finally someone has got it right. For once this strikes a balance.” However, my joy was short lived. At the end of the advert the man washing clothes spoils it all. Speaking in Bemba, he says: “What is surprising me is that it is us men who know this much about detergent. There is no reason to get married now.”

I asked a female colleague, Jesinta Kunda, if she saw anything wrong with such adverts.

“The world has moved on. My brothers do the laundry at home,” she said. “The two adverts give the impression that only women should wash clothes.”

She thought the first advert was in bad taste. “Honestly, that advert should be withdrawn; it is
encouraging the oppression and abuse of women. It is not only offensive to women, but men as well. People don’t marry because they want someone to do their laundry."

I also asked a male friend, Noel Mwale, what he thought. Concurring with Kunda, he said awareness is needed to help shape the nature of information we get from radio and television stations. But he also said as consumers of media, women need to force it to modernise.

"Women should not expect the media to change without them taking an active part in shaping that change. It has been said before that freedom is not given voluntarily by the oppressor; it is demanded by the oppressed. I for one do the laundry at home, but such ads make progressive people like me think twice," he said, adding that he wants his two daughters to grow up in a country where they will not be limited by their gender.

The 2010 Gender Links Gender and Media Progress Study found that despite the great strides women have made in breaking political glass ceilings in Southern Africa, they are still widely stereotyped in the media. Research found that men dominate in every news category, with women’s voices being heard the most on stories related to gender equality, children and media and entertainment.

What’s worse, the report, which analysed more than 30 000 news items in the region, found hundreds of blatant stereotypes and demeaning stories similar to the Zambian advertisements.

Political, media and civil society leaders need to show leadership on this issue. Ordinary people like Kunda and Mwale also need to take action, lodging complaints with television stations which air these advertisements and with newspapers and other media houses that produce sexist or gender-blind stories.

As long as policy-makers and media consumers do not see the harm in such adverts, Zambia risks maintaining traditions that are an obstacle to development. The country cannot develop if women, who constitute slightly more than half of the population, continue to be treated as second-class citizens and servants of men.

After her election, Johnson-Sirleaf told a BBC reporter that her victory was testimony to all the effort that has gone into bringing about gender equality throughout Africa and the world. But that effort is still fresh and the great strides can easily be repealed if the public doesn’t stay vigilant and ensure those in positions of power, from corporations to media to government, keep their promises and continue to fight for gender equality.

Valentine Chanda is a Zambian journalist. This article was produced as part of the Gender Links Opinion and Commentary Service, bringing you fresh views on everyday news.
Synovate research conducted during the 2010 Tanzanian elections found that media there gave minimal coverage to rural women who were complaining of being coerced by their husbands, sometimes under threat and violence, to vote for particular parties or candidates. The media did not see this as a serious issue. Women’s voices were not sought on this or other election issues.

Consumers of media should be wondering why editors and journalists are not interested in these stories of gender-based violence.

Media is normally quite good at putting a spotlight on wrongdoers and shaming perpetrators, be they politicians, criminals or celebrities. Why the silence when it comes to violence against women?

It seems that editors are breaking one of the cardinal rules of journalism and allowing personal feelings and behaviour to impact their reporting. Objectivity, significance and impact are no longer values guiding decisions on what to publish. This is why many gender-based violence stories fail to see the light of the day.

Several months ago I wrote a piece on marital rape in Kenya. Two editors working with a respected Kenyan newspaper refused to publish it.

“There is nothing like marital rape, what are you trying to tell people,” one editor told me. His reaction surprised me because my story was not based on hearsay or uncorroborated assertions, but rather on the findings of the respected 2008-2009 Kenya Demographic and Health Survey.

The study had revealed disturbing figures showing that at least 14% of married women said their current husband or partner had forced them to have sex in the past year, while another 37% had been subjected to sexual violence at some point in their relationship.

A recent Gender-Based violence Indicators Study conducted by Gender Links and the Medical Research Council found that 7.8% of South African women had experienced intimate partner sexual violence in the past year, while 19% of women had experienced such violence in their lifetime.

My piece was about a group of human rights organisations were lobbying parliament to make it a criminal act. Yet the editor I spoke with insisted there is no such thing as marital rape.

Synovate research conducted during the 2010 Tanzanian elections found that media there gave minimal coverage to rural women who were complaining of being coerced by their husbands, sometimes under threat and violence, to vote for particular parties or candidates. The media did not see this as a serious issue. Women’s voices were not sought on this or other election issues.

Consumers of media should be wondering why editors and journalists are not interested in these stories of gender-based violence.

Media is normally quite good at putting a spotlight on wrongdoers and shaming perpetrators, be they politicians, criminals or celebrities. Why the silence when it comes to violence against women?

It seems that editors are breaking one of the cardinal rules of journalism and allowing personal feelings and behaviour to impact their reporting.

Objectivity, significance and impact are no longer values guiding decisions on what to publish. This is why many gender-based violence stories fail to see the light of the day.

When male reporters and editors feel GBV stories touch on, or call into question, their personal behaviours and opinions, they become hostile to these stories.
This may be one of the reasons why the 2010 Gender and Media Progress Study found that stories about gender-based violence are rarely covered by media, accounting for just 4% of all stories in Southern Africa, despite countless other studies which note it is a widespread problem.

When articles about domestic violence and rape do appear in the news, they are more often about the rape or abuse of elderly women and children.

When rare stories are produced about young or middle-aged women being raped, journalists usually shift their reporting, suggesting that somehow the women “asked for it”. Questions arise. What was she wearing? Was she drunk? Where did it happen? Should she have been there? What time of night was it?

Similarly, when a woman is killed or battered by her husband, the story is framed as a love triangle gone wrong. Rarely do reporters dig deeper to investigate causes or patterns of violence, linking them to poverty levels, lack of human rights protections (or knowledge of them), or legal systems that take forever to hear and pass verdict on cases of gender-based violence.

Rarely do media report on the massive cost of gender-based violence in terms of treatment of injuries and sexually-transmitted disease, not to mention missed work hours. What about the invisible but extensive cost to our society when this cycle of violence is passed down from absent abusive fathers to their children. Why don’t journalists write about this?

In the mindset of many in the media, gender-based violence is not an issue worthy of paper and ink.

Journalists offer various lame reasons: gender-based violence stories don’t sell papers the same way political stories do, survivors are not willing to speak to media, and journalists lack the skills to cover sensitive topics. All talk, all excuses.

These issues are not the problem; it is the journalists and editors who harbour negative attitudes towards these stories. And by not reporting on these stories, the media becomes part of the problem, almost as culpable as the perpetrators of violence.

We need to demand action from our media. Action that will transform our newsrooms and ensure gender-based violence is treated as the serious human rights abuse it is. Journalists and editors need to take their personal feelings out of the equation and open their eyes to the truth, finally seeing this issue as an epidemic that will not go away until the media is responsible enough to report on it.

Arthur Okwemba is a journalist with the African Women and Child Feature Service in Kenya. This article was produced as part of the Gender Links Opinion and Commentary Service, bringing you fresh views on everyday news.

For the research quoted in this article go to www.genderlinks.org.za
This Seat is Taken: Elections and the Underrepresentation of Women in Seven Southern African countries

By Gender Links (Editor)

The countries surveyed in this book provide instances in which women’s representation is significantly low. The contributions in this book consider the importance of gender equality in elections. Each contribution assesses the commitment of gender equality on the part of policymakers, law makers, political party leaders, electoral authorities and civil society in the country concerned.

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By Colleen Lowe Morna and Loveness Jambaya Nyakujarah

This report is a sequel to the 2009 regional baseline study of the provisions of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development against the reality on the ground conducted by the Southern Africa Gender Protocol Alliance in all the 15 SADC States. It tracks progress made in the past year since the 2009 Heads of State Summit and includes updated data and a new chapter on Peace building and conflict resolution.

Read online:
http://www.genderlinks.org.za/article/sadc-gender-protocol-2010-barometer-2010-08-10

Gender in Media Education: An Audit of Gender in Journalism & Media Education and Training

By Patricia A. Made and Kubi Rama

The Gender in Media Education in Southern Africa (GIME) is the most comprehensive audit yet undertaken of the gender dimensions of journalism and media education and training in tertiary institutions in Southern Africa. Covering 25 institutions in 13 countries including Botswana, DRC, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, the study took place from October 2009 to April 2010.

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By Susan Tolmay and Colleen Lowe Morna

This report is part of the third phase of the research project that led to the Gender Links (GL) publication: At the Coalface: Gender and Local Government in Southern Africa. The aim of this programme is to conduct research on gender and local government in all of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries.

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Read online: 
http://plan-international.org/girls/static/docs/BIAAG_2010_EN2.pdf

Queer Malawi: 
Untold Stories
By Dr Patricia Watson

Published by Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA) and the Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP), this book offers portraits of the lives of gay men and women in Malawi. The accounts in the book portray the joys of love and the heartache of rejection, the dangers posed by homophobia and hatred in communities, as well as the comfort of close friends and relatives.

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Children’s Views
Not in the News: Portrayal of Children in South African Print Media 2010
By Media Monitoring Africa (MMA)

MMA has been monitoring and analysing print media’s performance, in terms of how it reports on children, since 2003. This is its fourth report on the topic, and since 2003 the percentage of articles featuring children has doubled. Author and MMA’s Specialised Children’s Monitoring Project Coordinator Ronell Singh says that while they are seeing gradual progress being made in how the media reports on children, there is still plenty of room for improvement.

Read online:

Queer Malawi:
Untold Stories
By Dr Patricia Watson

Strength of a Woman -
Untold stories of Maternal Health and Death
By Jane Godia

Published by African Woman and child Feature service (AWC), this special issue looks at what is happening to women who are giving birth under various circumstances and who in one way or another leave behind untold suffering. The stories were produced after the African Womanand Child Feature Service through the Media Diversity Centre held a two day training for journalists from its content centres on how they could write reproductive health stories with a difference.

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