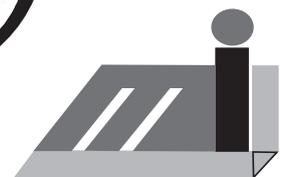


Chapter five: Malawi



GL gender and media training workshop in Malawi.

GENDER & MEDIA AUDIENCE STUDY



GEMSA
Gender and Media Southern Africa

Table 5.1: Summary of key data from the findings of the GMAS in Malawi

KEY DATA	Malawi		CONSOLIDATED	
	% women	% men	% women	% men
Most important source of news				
Radio	94	98	51	51
Television	6	1	37	31
Newspapers	0	1	11	16
Internet	0	0	1	2
Who selects the news medium?				
Self	45	46	49	55
Spouse/partner	20	15	14	12
Other family member	25	20	28	23
Fellow worker	2	1	2	2
Employer	2	4	2	2
Friend or neighbour	5	10	4	4
Proprietor of a public space	0	3	0	2
News preferences (genres)				
Short news reports	74	72	55	53
In depth features	18	25	28	32
News that asks for feedback (e.g. Letters to the editor)	8	3	12	10
Opinion and Commentary	0	0	5	5
How women and men are represented and portrayed <i>News reflects the interests of men and women equally.</i>				
Agree	43	55	40	43
Unsure	9	11	17	16
Disagree	48	34	42	41
How often are women used as sources in news stories?				
Very often	10	16	18	21
Often	28	34	36	37
Seldom	61	49	42	39
Never	1	1	3	3
The news sometimes shows very sexual images of women. When you see something like this in the news how do you respond?				
I find these stories and images entertaining and/or interesting	3	4	4	12
I don't really notice them	0	2	8	10
I feel uncomfortable when I see them	49	46	43	36
I feel they are insulting to women	48	47	42	34
They encourage me to buy the newspaper or watch the news	0	1	3	8
What audiences would like to see more of <i>If the ideas and views of women were reported more often, the news would be</i>				
More interesting	65	69	68	47
No different	9	8	22	36
Less interesting	26	23	10	18
The news would be more interesting if there were stories about women doing a wider range of things.				
Agree	79	79	78	59
Unsure	6	7	10	19
Disagree	16	14	12	22

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This section of the report presents the findings of the Malawi Gender and Media Audience Study (GMAS) conducted by Gender Links in partnership with GEMSA-Malawi and the Malawi Institute of Journalism (MIJ). It is the first comprehensive study of audience news consumption patterns and preferences in Malawi generally, as well as the gender dimensions of these.

The findings are based on the responses of 91 women and 89 men, a total sample of 180 in Lilongwe, Blantyre and Mzuzu City. The theoretical framework for the research and the methodology are described in detail in Chapter One, the overview to this report.

Key findings

Table 5.1 summarises the main findings of the study. Key findings include:

Radio is the most important source of news. Radio is overwhelmingly the main source of news in Malawi with 94% women and 98% men (the highest such proportion of any country in the study) saying that they get most of their news from this medium. The percentage of women and men in the sample in Malawi who get news from television and newspapers is extremely low in comparison with the region. For example, only 6% women in Malawi cited television as a main news source compared to the region's 37%, and for men in Malawi, it was even lower at 1% compared to the region's 31% men. The high consumption of radio news is due to the fact that 65% of the country's estimated 12 million people, the majority of whom are women, are unable to read or write. Radio is also more affordable than other forms of mass media.

Newspapers lag behind, especially for women. Despite the existence of a number of print media in Malawi, no women and only 1% men cited newspapers as their main source of news. This is the lowest such finding for any country in the study.

No one in Malawi gets their news from the Internet. Similar to the findings in Namibia, Zambia, Angola, and Lesotho none of the respondents rely on the Internet as their main source of news. Even though the figures for the Internet elsewhere are low, they reflect at least some access to the new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). This poses a major challenge to Malawi and countries with similar findings to increase Internet access and promote an IT culture.

There is no correlation between levels of education and the main source of news: Unlike the other countries, there tended to be no direct correlation between educational levels and the main source of news, with the majority of women and men in all educational categories in the sample choosing radio. The findings show that 32% women with tertiary education and 34% men with tertiary education chose radio as their main

source of news, while 30% women and 30% men with secondary education also chose radio. Women (32%) and men (34%) with primary education did not constitute the highest proportion of those who chose radio, which tends to be the dominant medium for all groups as a source of news in Malawi.

Women and men prefer short news reports to any other news genre: Consistent with the overall findings, most women (74%) and men (72%) interviewed prefer short news reports to any other news genre. In Malawi, fewer women (18%) and men (25%) preferred in-depth features compared to the regional findings for the same category (28% women and 32% men).

More women than men prefer interactive news: Although less women and men chose news that asks for feedback as their favourite genre compared to the rest of the region, the fact that a considerably higher proportion of Malawian women (8%, compared to 3% men) did, is significant. This shows that women are interested in engaging with the media.

No one in Malawi chose opinion and commentary: None of the respondents interviewed in Malawi chose opinion and commentary as their most important news genre. This finding partly reflects the fact that newspapers, which are traditionally associated with this genre, account for an extremely low proportion of news consumption, with no women citing newspapers as a source of news.

There are still gender gaps in who decides on the news medium, but this is relatively small: The majority of both women (45%) and men (46%) in Malawi, make independent choices about which news medium they get their news from. As in other countries in the region, both women and men cited other family members as the next most important category influencing such choices. However a higher proportion of Malawian women (20%) than in any other country in the region said their spouse decides which medium is consumed. This reflects the deeply embedded patriarchal roots of Malawian society.

There are mixed perceptions about women's representation in the news: In Malawi as in other countries in this study, there were mixed views on whether the news reflects the interests of women and men equally. While 48% women (compared to 34% of the men) in Malawi said the news **does not** reflect the concerns of women and men equally, 55% men, compared to 43% women, agreed that the news does reflect women's and men's concerns equally. On the related question of whether or not women are accessed "often", or "seldom" as news sources, 61% women and 49% men in the sample said women are "seldom" accessed while 29% women and 34% men said women are "often" accessed as sources. The GMBS showed that women, at the time of the study, constituted 12% of the news sources in Malawi. Varying perceptions on women's representation and access to expression in the news highlight the need to step up gender and media literacy campaigns.

But strong perceptions about gender biases in portrayal:

Like audiences in the other countries that participated in GMAS Malawian audiences had clear views on gender bias in the portrayal of men and women. Reflecting the findings of the GMBS and the regional findings of GMAS, they said that women are most likely to feature in the news in roles such as model/beauty contestant, victim, health worker, sex worker and as a business person (most likely referring to the predominance of women in the informal business sectors as traders, etc). Malawian men, on the other hand, appear as politicians, sportspersons, civil servants/government officials, business persons (perhaps in the more formal and corporate business sector) and as entertainers.

And especially strong views on the use of images that portray women as mere sex objects: As in all other countries in the study, high proportions of both women and men found sexual images of women in the news “uncomfortable” and “insulting”. Both Malawian women and men identified sexual images of women as the kind of news they would most like to see less of.

Malawians prefer stories reported by women, and strongly support gender equality in newsrooms: In Malawi, 56% women and 53% men said that they preferred news stories reported by women. More men (47%) than women (40%) said they believe that women report different kinds of news stories to men. The majority of the women and men in the sample said it is mostly men who report the news. As in other countries, a high proportion of both women (81%) and men (70%) believe it is important to have equal numbers of female and male journalists. This is an important message to media decision-makers about the need for gender policies in newsrooms as well as gender training for male and female journalists.

Women and men want to see more positive stories; and women more stories about their concerns: Malawian women and men would like to see more positive stories in the news. Women want more stories on women’s rights/concerns/issues, human interest and more local and community news. Men also want human interest and local/community news, but also cited more in-depth news and analysis.

More men than women would find the news more interesting if the ideas and views of women were reported more often: In Malawi, both women and men, but especially men (69% compared to 65% women) said the news would be more interesting if the ideas and views of women were reported more often. This is an interesting finding in that in other countries in the GMAS, more women than men said they would find the news more interesting with more women accessed as sources.

It’s not just about more women’s voices but about women in diverse roles: An equal percentage (79%) of women and men interviewed in Malawi agreed that the news would be more interesting if it carried more stories about

women doing a wider range of things. Women and men also want to see men in non-traditional roles: as caregivers, parents and home-makers.

CONTEXT

Malawi is a small landlocked country in Southern Africa, bordered by Tanzania in the north and Zambia in the west. Its southern and eastern borders are flanked by Mozambique. The country’s population is more than 12 million, the majority of whom are women. After 30 years of single-party rule, the country adopted a multi-party democracy system in 1994. Divided into three administrative regions – southern, central and northern – a large proportion of the population is concentrated in the southern region, where Blantyre, the commercial capital, is located. Malawi has a predominately agrarian economy, with tobacco as the main foreign exchange earner for the economy.

Media context

The country’s Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and the right to information. A vibrant media environment has emerged in Malawi with the adoption of a new Constitution in 1995 to institute a multi-party democracy. In 1998, the Communications Act, which liberalises the airwaves, was passed. This Act paved the way for a plethora of private and community radios nationwide. The official media regulatory body is the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) established in 2001. A large majority of the media in Malawi are concentrated in the Southern region.

Malawi also has a number of media training institutions, media monitoring organisations and groups involved in media advocacy. These include, among others:

- The Malawi Institute of Journalism
- The University of Malawi Polytechnic
- The National Media Institute of Southern Africa (NAMISA)
- The Journalists Association of Malawi
- The Malawi Media Women’s Association GEMSA Malawi



Table 5.2: Media in Malawi

MEDIA	STATE	PRIVATE
Television		
Television Malawi	✓	
Radio		
African Bible College		✓
Capital Radio 102.5 FM		✓
Dzimwe Radio		✓
Mij Radio	✓	
Malawi broadcasting Corporation		✓
Power 101 FM		✓
Radio Islam		✓
Transworld Radio Blantyre FM		✓
Calvary Family Church Radio		✓
Joy Radio		✓
Newspapers		
Daily Times		✓
The Nation		✓
The Chronicle		✓
Malawi News		✓
UDF News		✓
The Dispatch		✓
The Enquirer		✓
Weekly News	✓	
The Malawi Standard		✓

Gender and media in Malawi

Although Malawi has a national gender policy and a plan of action for mainstreaming gender into all programmes and policies, the country's media lags far behind. Prior to the 2002-2003 Gender and Media Baseline Study (GMBS), the Malawi Media Women's association (MAMWA) commissioned research on inequality in newsrooms.

Independent female researchers have published studies on the media's negative portrayal of women. The GMBS found that women constituted 12% of all known media sources; the lowest figure of all the 12 countries participating in the study. Men predominated as sources in categories such as politics, sports, education, media and entertainment and even on issues of gender equality.

At the Gender and Media Summit held from 12-14 September 2004 in Johannesburg, two Malawian media houses – The Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), which is state-owned, and Capital Radio Malawi, a privately-owned media that scored lowest in the GMBS with only 6% women sources – presented case studies on their development of gender policies.

Both media houses aim to mainstream gender in all their policies, strategies and programmes. Capital Fm now has a 30 minute, twice weekly programme, *Gender Voices*, which strives to introduce new perspectives on issues that affect the lives of women and men in the country. According to the monitoring report on the Malawi 2004 elections by MAMWA, this station also gave access to women candidates and was the first private radio station to start phone-in programmes on political and campaign issues, including gender.



Henry Malunda (right) of the Mij at a gender workshop for media trainers.

THE GMAS

The GMAS is a follow-up to the GMBS, focusing on news consumers and how they interact with the news from a gender perspective. The theoretical framework and methodology for the study are described in Chapter One, which provides an overview to the research.

The preliminary desk top research for this study showed that there is little formal audience research carried out by the media in Malawi. Editorial decisions are guided by audience feedback received in letters and talk back shows; as well as the “gut” feel of those involved in marketing and news production. This makes the GMAS not only the first study on gender responses and preferences with regards to news, but also the most comprehensive study to date that the authors are aware of on audience responses and preferences to news generally.

Locations

The salient features of the three locations (see adjacent map) are as follows:

Lilongwe is the country’s capital and is located in the central region. It has a new and old city and has been the capital since 1975. This is the agricultural market centre for the fruitful central region plateau and the city is home to a population of over 223,000.

Blantyre is the industrial and commercial centre of Malawi. Most of the country’s media houses are located in this city in the southern region. It stretches for about 20 kilometres into the neighbouring city of Limbe.

Mzuzu is the capital city of the north which is the country’s most sparsely populated region. This is the main stopover city and turning off point for all areas in the north.



Getting the news in Malawi

Demographic information

As illustrated in table 5.3, the study included interviews with 89 men and 91 women (compared to the 90 of each in the brief).

Country	Sites	women	men
Malawi	Lilongwe Blantyre Mzuzu		
Total		91	89

Figure 5.1 illustrates respondents by age groups (20-35; 36-50 and 50+).

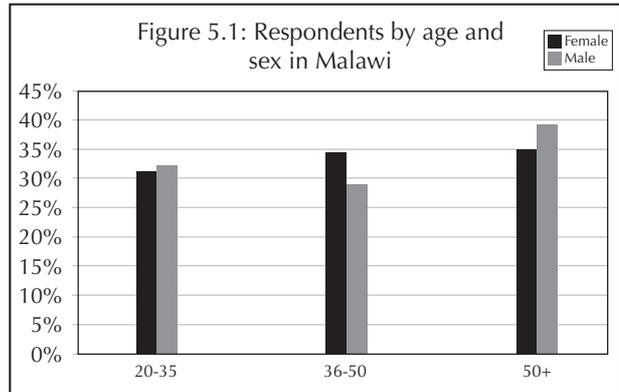
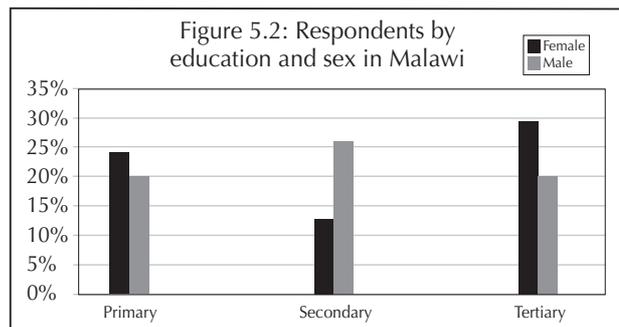


Figure 5.2 illustrates respondents according to education levels (primary, secondary and tertiary).



Advocating women's rights.

FINDINGS

Media availability and Use

Main source of news

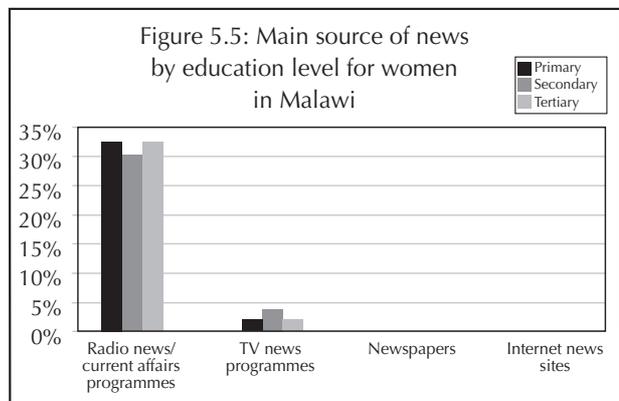
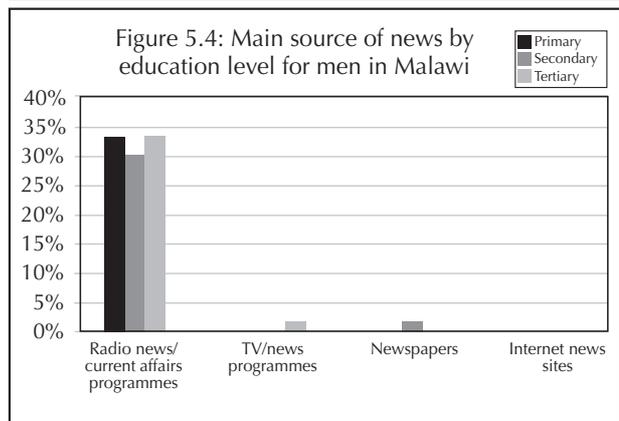
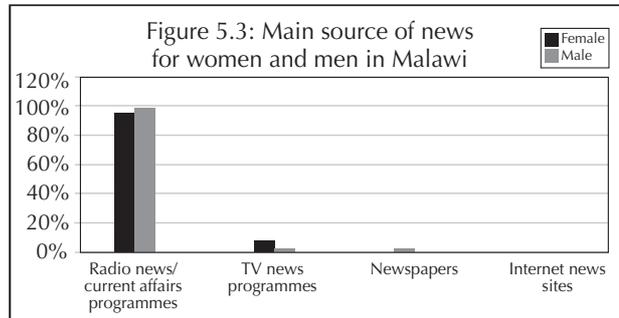
Radio: Across all education levels, radio is overwhelmingly the main source of news for women (94%) and men (98%). The main reason cited by women and men for the choice of radio is its affordability and wide reach in a country where newspaper circulation is small.

Television: Only 6% women and 1% men chose TV. In a country where the per capita income is estimated at \$US600, one prohibiting factor against television is the cost.

Newspapers: Malawi is also the country in the study with the lowest newspaper readership among the sample interviewed. Only 1% men and no women chose this medium as a main source of news.

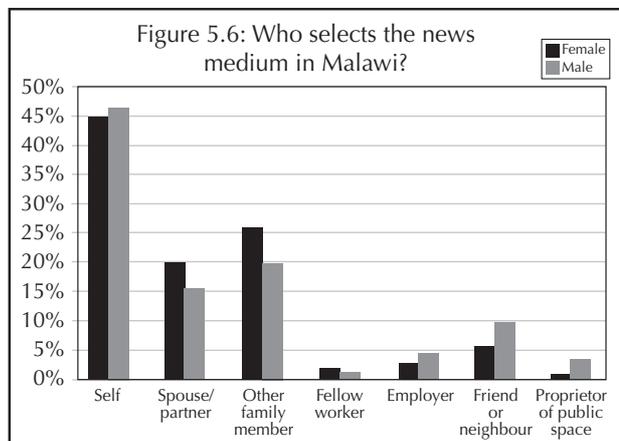
Internet: None of the respondents interviewed chose this medium.

Education: Radio news appeals to women and men across all education levels. This underscores the fact that affordability, as well as convenience and low levels of literacy, especially among women (2003 estimates indicate that only 49.8% of the female population is literate), play a key role in determining which media is consumed in Malawi.



Media selection and acquisition

Figure 5.6 illustrates who makes the decisions about which medium to buy, listen to or watch. There is a small gender gap of 1 % between the women (45%) and the men (46%) in the sample who select their own news medium. As in the overall findings, the second highest category of those seen to influence a decision on which medium is accessed are other family members, not including spouse or partner. Some 25% women and 20% men cited other family member as influencing the news medium selected. However, Malawi had the highest proportion of women (20%) who said that a spouse or partner decides on which medium is consumed.



News genres

The majority of women (74%) and men (72%) prefer short news reports to any other news genre, which is consistent with the majority choice of radio as a main source of news. While more women (8%) than men (3%) prefer news that asks for feedback such as letters to the editor, this genre was not as popular as in other countries in the regional findings. 18% women and 25% men chose in-depth features/documentaries, but none of the respondents chose the opinion and commentary genre.

Topics

Respondents received a list of news topics and were asked to choose the three topics of most interest to them. As in other countries in the study, most of the men chose sports and political stories followed by agriculture. Women in Malawi were the only ones in the study who chose political stories as their first choice, followed by health and HIV/AIDS, and then stories about education and social issues.

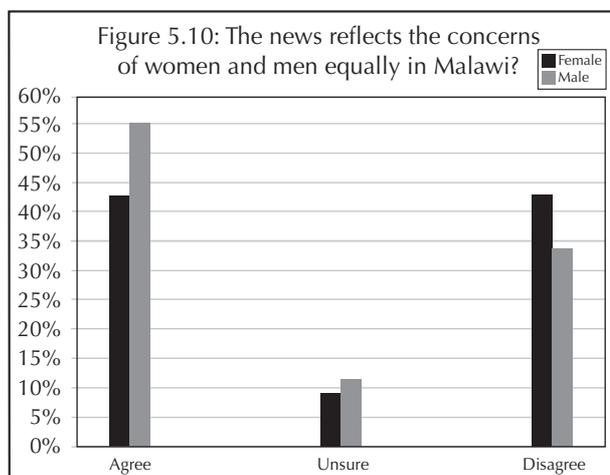
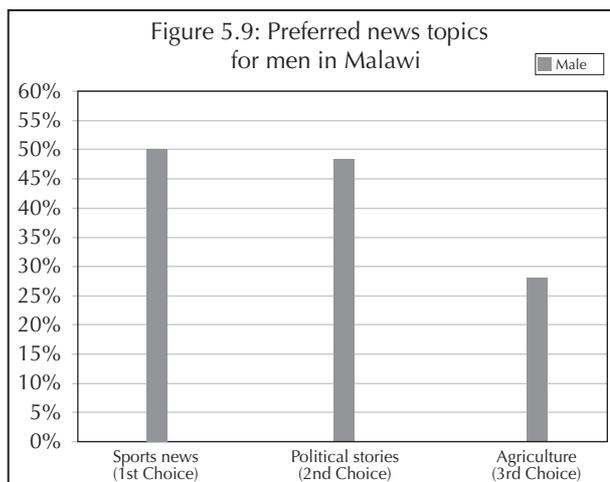
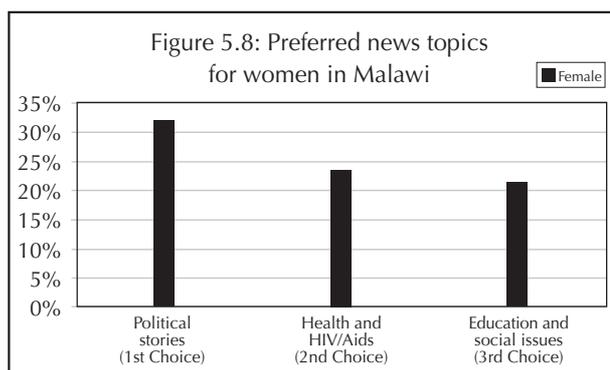
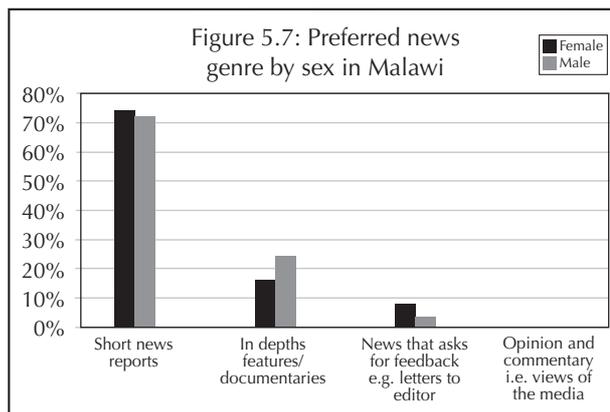
The GMBS found a strong bias in news coverage towards the kinds of topics that men said they are most interested in with those that women selected (education, social issues, health, etc) being regarded as “soft news”. This suggests that media decision-makers do not pay enough attention to their women news consumers, who constitute half of their potential market. The finding that Malawian women are interested in political stories should open important opportunities for expanding media marketing.

Representation and portrayal

Does the news reflect the concerns of women and men equally?

More women (43%) than men (34%) believe that the news does not reflect the concerns of women and men equally, while more men (55%) than women (43%) in the sample said that the news does reflect women’s and men’s concerns equally.

Women said that women are sidelined in the news because men hold high positions and are “favoured” by the media and that women are not considered a priority by the media. Men suggested that the coverage is equal, but that women are unable to express themselves, and that with the democratic changes in the country, media houses are giving equal coverage to both women and men.



“Women are sidelined”

The following is a summary of responses by Malawian women in the sample to the question: does the news reflect the concerns of women and men equally?

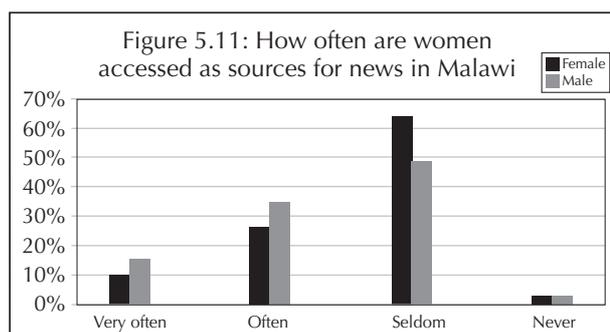
- “Men dominate the news in challenging topics while women appear in less important topics such as beauty and homemaking.”
- “Men are favoured because fellow men hold high positions in the media.”
- “No equality, men dominate.”
- “Women are sidelined on issues like politics and government business.”
- “Concerns are expressed equally only that woman’s views are sourced in unimportant issues.”
- “News portrays men as important whose concerns should be considered first than women’s.”
- “There is room for women to contribute their views in the news.”

Men added:

- “With the coming of democracy media houses are giving equal coverage to both women and men.”
 - “More news is centred on men, journalists just follow trends writing news.”
 - “Women too are given the opportunity to express their views unlike in the past.”
 - “Both men’s and women’s concerns are reflected in such issues as business and agriculture”.
 - “Information from women is in small quantities, so they are left out.”
 - “There is equality in news coverage due to gender awareness.”
 - “Reporters try to give equal coverage to both men and women, however men still dominate.”
- “Men and women are represented in the same way.”

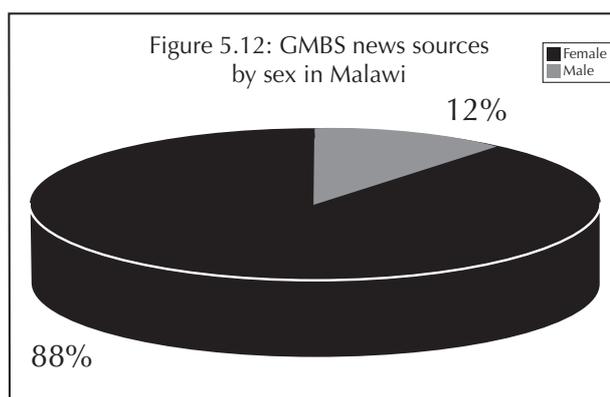
Women as sources of news

The majority of the women (61%) and men (49%) believe that women are “seldom” accessed as sources in stories. This is higher than the regional findings where 42% women and 39% men said the media “seldom” accesses women as sources. Fewer women (10%) and men (16%) believed women are used “often” as sources of news. This reflects a relatively high level of gender and media awareness that might be attributed to the lobbying and advocacy work of organisations like MAMWA, GEMSA, MIJ etc.



What the GMBS showed

The GMBS in Malawi found that women constituted only 12% of news sources, compared to the regional average of 17%. Malawi had the lowest figure of all the 12 countries surveyed. The relatively high awareness among the women and men interviewed in the GMAS on women’s limited access to expression in the media reflects the concerted gender and media advocacy campaigns that have taken place in Malawi.

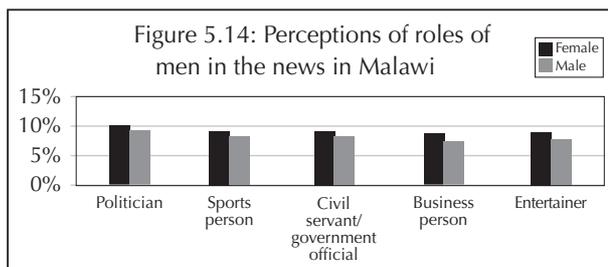
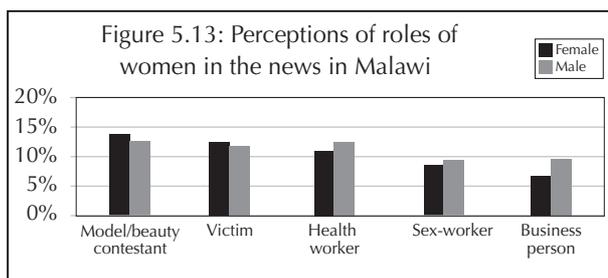


How are women and men represented in the news?

Women and men in the sample were asked how they see women and men represented in the news. A list of categories was given to each respondent and they identified the regularity with which they see women and men in particular roles.

Most women and men in the sample said women are most likely to be portrayed in the news as models/beauty contestants, victims, health workers, sex workers and as business persons (this may be a reflection of the large number of women in the informal business sector). The GMBS found that women appeared most often as homemakers and beauty contestants.

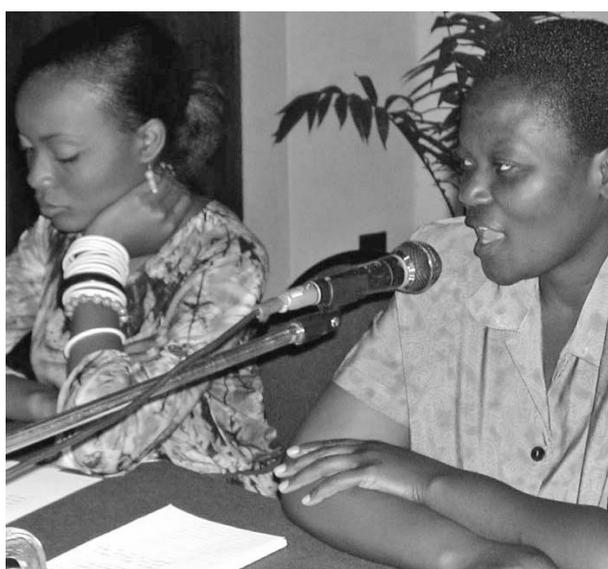
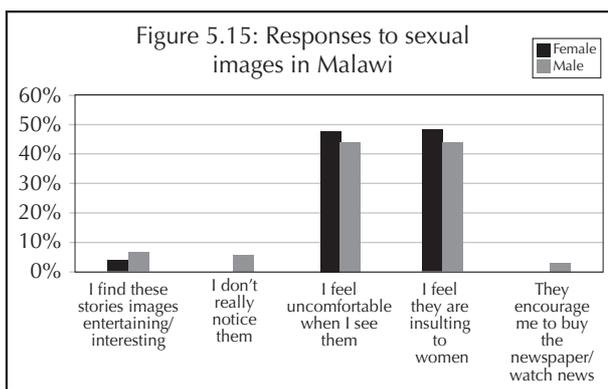
Most women and men in the GMAS sample said men appear more often in the news as politicians, sportspersons, civil servants/government officials, business persons (perhaps in the more formal business and corporate sectors) and as entertainers.



Sexual Images

Some 49% of Malawian women in the study and 46% men (higher than the region's 43% women and 36% men) said they find sexual images of women in the news "uncomfortable". Some 48% women and 47% men in Malawi (compared to the region's 42% women and 34% men) said they find such images "insulting". No women and only 1% men said that such images "encourage me to buy the newspaper or watch the news", one of the lowest such findings in the study. This is at odds with the argument frequently put forward by the media decision-makers that such images are critical to their bottom line.

Explaining their responses, many women spoke about the images as being "degrading", "embarrassing" and against Malawian culture. Men also said that such images are not culturally acceptable and also noted that such images show no "respect" for women, are "offensive", and may lead to women being "sexually harassed".



GEMSA country representative Stella Mhura (right)

“It’s like undressing my own mother”

Even more so than women and men in other countries, Malawian respondents expressed strong sentiments about the use of sexual images in the media. Explaining their response to these images in the news, women had this to say:

- “I react negatively. Women are treated like sex objects.”
- “It is bad. The media should also show nude pictures of men. Why women only?”
- “The images deprive women’s dignity.”
- “They encourage stereotyping of women and bad behaviour among children.”
- “It’s contrary to our cultural set up”.
- “It’s like I have been undressed too.”
- “It’s irritating. People are driven crazy after seeing pornographic pictures.”
- “They depict the country’s image as unholy.”

Men added:

- “We are losing our tradition.”
- “I feel sorry for the women.”
- “Interesting in such a way that despite equality awareness messages, the media is still portraying such images.”
- “It’s abusing women.”
- “It’s against women’s rights.”
- “It’s bad, because people see women as sex instruments.”
- “It’s shocking to see women used in such manner”.
- “I always switch off my television, because I feel embarrassed.”
- “I feel disappointed and embarrassed with our media.”
- “It’s against our culture and my religion (Islam) to expose women in public.”
- “It’s embarrassing. It’s like undressing my own mother.”

Media practitioners

Table 5.4 is a summary of the responses of women and men in the sample to a set of statements about media practitioners. More than half of the women and men in the sample agreed that it is mostly men who report the news. Most women and men had mixed views as to whether women report on different kinds of stories to men. But 70% men and 81% women endorsed the principle of gender equality in newsrooms.

Audience preferences

Types of news

Respondents were asked in the form of an open-ended question, what they would like to see more of and less of in the news. The answers were then grouped.

More human interest stories

Women and men want to see more human interest stories. In addition, women want to see more stories about women’s rights/concerns/issues and more local/community news. Men also want to see more local/community news and in-depth news and analysis.

Table 5.4: Perceptions of media practitioners in Malawi

Statements	Agree		Unsure		Disagree	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
I think that it is mostly men who report the news.	74	63	6	13	20	25
I prefer news stories reported by men.	26	47	21	21	53	32
I prefer news stories reported to women.	56	53	15	21	53	36
I think that women report different kinds of news stories to men.	40	47	7	17	53	36
I think that there should be equal numbers of male and female reporters.	81	70	4	8	14	22

Figure 5.16: Top three types of news preferred by women in Malawi

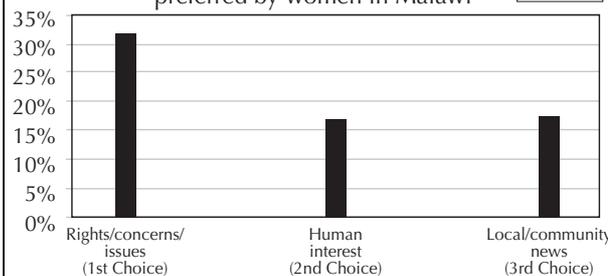
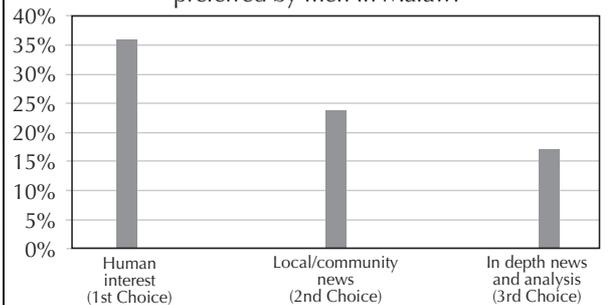
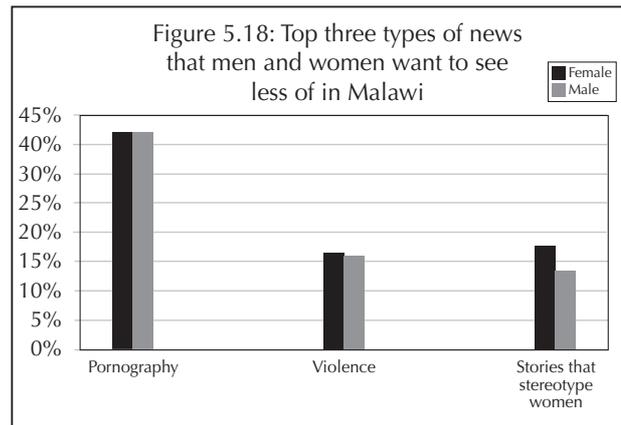


Figure 5.17: Top three types of news preferred by men in Malawi



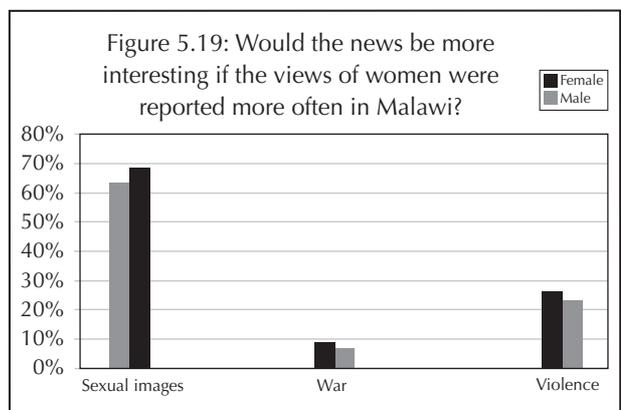
Less pornography and violence

When asked what they would like to see and hear less of in the news, women and men had strikingly similar responses. They both cited pornography, violence and stories that stereotype women in the news as what they would like to see and hear less of.



More women's voices

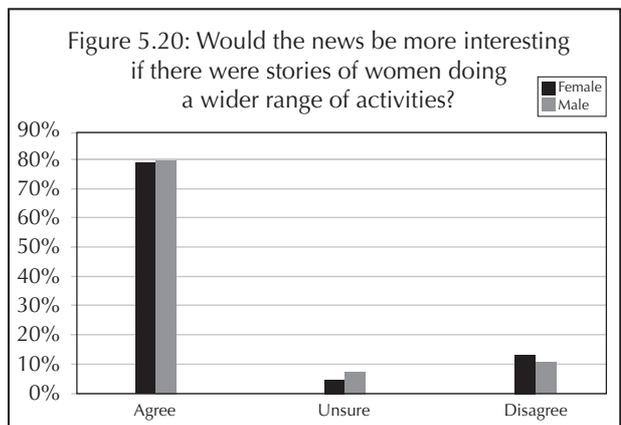
As in other countries, a high proportion of women (65%) and the majority of men (69%) agree that the news would be more interesting if the views of women were reported more often. Malawi is the only country in the region where a slightly higher proportion of men than women hold this view. Few respondents (9% of women and 8% of men) believe the news would be no different if the views of women featured more often. However, Malawi and Mozambique had the highest proportion of women (26%) who said the news would be *less interesting* if the views of women were reported more often. This points to the need for continued gender and media literacy.



Diversity

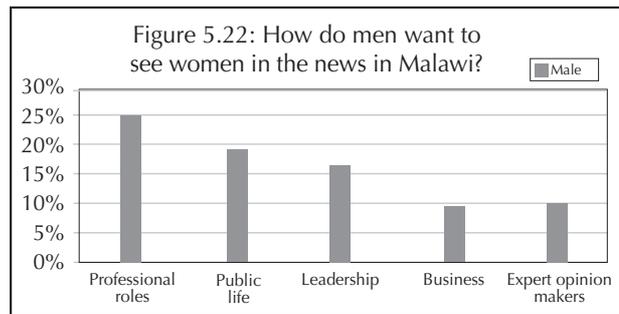
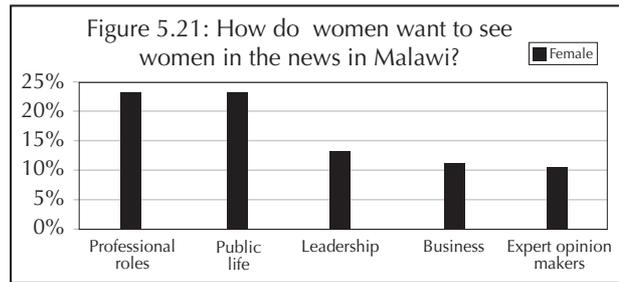
An equal proportion of women and men (79%) agreed that the news would be more interesting if women featured in a wider diversity of roles. The comparative figure for the region is 78% women and 59% men. The fact that such a high proportion of Malawian men believe that the news would be more interesting if it featured women in a wider diversity of roles is an important finding, and one that should be pause for thought among media marketing departments.

Respondents were asked, in the form of an open-ended question, to identify the ways in which women and men should be represented more in the news. Respondents provided answers that were subsequently analysed and grouped together.



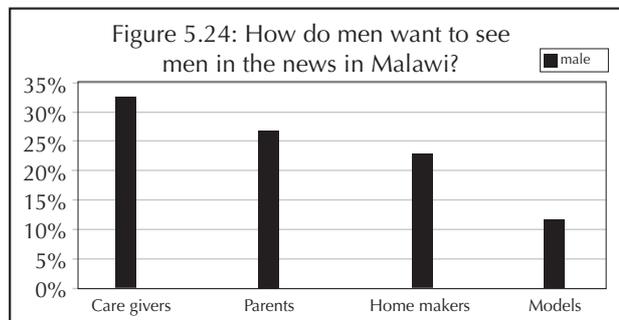
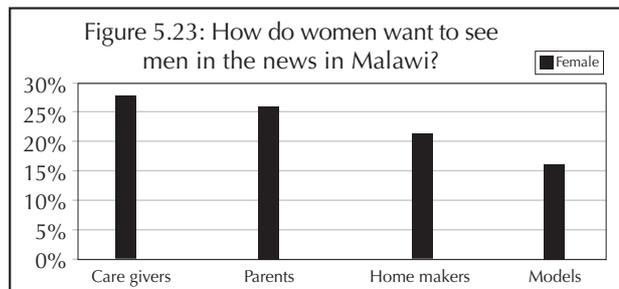
New roles for women

Women and men identified the following as roles in which they would like to see more women in the media: in professional roles, in public life, in leadership roles, in business and as expert opinion makers.



New roles for men

Women and men said they would like to see and hear more men in the non-traditional roles of care-giver, homemaker, parent and model.



Conclusions and recommendations

The findings of this study, which reflect distinct gender patterns in news consumption and preferences have important implications for media policy makers, decision-makers and practitioners, as well as for gender and media activists and citizens who consume the news. These are summarised in the final chapter of this report that charts the way forward.