



Radio talk show monitors at work in Zimbabwe.
Photo: Loveness Jambaya

Chapter Six

Conclusions & Recommendations

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Who talks on talk shows is, as far as we are aware, the first gender audit of radio talk shows to have been conducted anywhere, and certainly the first to have been conducted in Southern Africa.

Given the importance of radio as a means of communication on the continent, and the possibilities opened by radio talk shows for citizen participation, this medium is critical to efforts to grow media audiences as well as deepen democracy. Gender equality is intrinsic to both of these.

Although there are interesting country variations and nuances, what the research unequivocally shows is that women are the missing voices in radio talk shows: whether as hosts, guests or callers. This finding concurs with the findings of the Gender and Media Baseline Study (GMBS) that women's voices are under represented in the production and content of the news, constituting an average of 17 percent news sources across the region.

Again in findings similar to the GMBS, the radio talk show study found that gender stereotypes are often perpetuated without being challenged; gender specific topics are seldom discussed; and opportunities to raise gender issues in mainstream debates are missed. This is despite the fact that audiences, and particularly women, would like to discuss a broader range of topics, including gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The Gender and Media Audience Study (GMAS) which followed the GMBS found that across Southern Africa, women had a higher preference than men for "news which asks for feedback" such as letters and talk shows. The question that arises is why this interest does not translate into greater participation by women in these programmes.

The study suggests a variety of reasons. As illustrated in the case of *Kaya Talk* and *Afternoon Talk* in South Africa, there is a correlation between having women presenters and attracting higher levels of women audiences (although this may not always be the case). A related factor is what topics are chosen, with women showing a strong preference for discussing social issues such as health and education (that feature on these two programmes). This finding concurs with the GMAS, in which men cited politics and sports as their favourite news topics, while women rated social issues more strongly.

However, there may be other factors at play as well. For example in Zimbabwe, the socially-oriented *Chakafukidza dzimba matenga* (also one of the few programmes in the study to feature gender-specific topics) had a lower level of women's participation than *Youth Forum*, that covers more mainstream topics. The latter targets more rural audiences, where women are not as likely to have phones, or may be more socially inhibited to speak out. This suggests that there are also often social and economic factors that underpin what may, on the face of it, appear to be a reluctance by women to speak out.

The attitude taken by talk show hosts is also important. Although women had a clear preference to talk about the issues that have the most direct bearing on their every day lives, they also expressed a higher interest in current affairs topics than might be expected. However, when a talk show host asks a woman who calls into a current affairs programme if she knows anything about politics (as happened in one instance) this could clearly be a deterrent to other women participating in such programmes.

Does it matter whether or not women participate? What the research shows is that on the face of it audiences believe it does not. Comments made by audiences suggest, however, that many of them have not really thought about the issue. This finding concurs with that of the GMAS in which audiences did not seem to have a clear sense of what and who makes up the news. It is interesting that in the case of *Chakafukidza dzimba Matenga* audiences automatically assumed that it is mostly women who call in (which proved not to be the case) most likely because of the kind of

topics discussed. In South Africa, audiences also clearly associated the “hard core” current affairs programmes with male callers and the more socially-oriented programmes with female callers.

Some hosts did not seem to mind if mostly men called; as a Zimbabwean host put it “it is not something I would lose sleep over.” Others, like the producer and host of the *After Eight Debate* in South Africa had thought about the issue and make an effort to ensure gender balance where they can do so most immediately: among their invited guests. They showed an interest in engaging further on how to encourage more women to call in.

What the study did clearly show is that where there is gender balance in debates, there is likely to be a broader range of views, especially on burning social issues (such as delaying marriage until young women have completed their education). Having women participate as experts and callers (on whatever subject) also sends out a strong message about their equal status in society.

From a commercial point of view, marketing departments have a keen interest in ensuring a strong following by women on chat shows because women are seen by advertisers as playing a decisive role in spending decisions. Growing female audiences is a key commercial imperative for all radio stations.

Against this backdrop, the recommendations that arise from this study are that:

- **Media decision-makers** make a conscious decision, at policy level, to ensure that chat shows have women and men hosts (possibly even to co facilitate shows) and that equal numbers of women and men are invited as guests.
- **Talk show hosts** engage with the findings of this study and undertake gender awareness training to assist them in being equally accessible to male and female callers; in being able to pick up on pertinent gender issues as part of mainstream debates; in recognising and challenging gender stereotypes. Talk show hosts can also proactively encourage more women to call in.
- **Media marketing departments** undertake more in-depth surveys of their audiences, and disaggregate the findings by gender, with a view to diversifying topics and redesigning shows to cater for the needs of male and female audiences.
- **Gender and media activists and networks** work closely with media houses in giving feedback on monitoring; compiling data bases of potential women guests; conducting media literacy campaigns to encourage more women to participate in talk shows.
- **Media regulatory authorities** include a requirement in annual reports by broadcasters as part of licensing conditions that broadcasters report on what they have done to advance gender equality through all their programming, including talk shows.
- **The Gender and Media 2006 Awards** as part of GEMSA’s Gender and Media Summit include a category on the radio talk show that does the most to encourage women’s participation and provoke debate on critical gender issues.
- **Mirror on the media** conduct a further study on what prevents women from participating more actively in talk shows to further guide all these initiatives.

Annexes

Annex One: Methodology

Which media to monitor

- Each country should choose a minimum of two radio stations to monitor.
- Where possible there should be a mix of state controlled and private broadcasters.

Which shows to monitor

- The show should be a talk show or a call in show. This means it must be a radio show in which there is a host/presenter who requests people to call into the studio to give comment on a particular topic.
- It is recommended that two types of shows be monitored:-
 1. Current affairs shows, where news and topical issues are discussed and debated.
 2. More socially oriented shows.
- The show should be 30 to 60 minutes in length.

How often to monitor

Each show should be monitored at the same time over a staggered week for the monitoring period, if the show is a weekly show and occurs on the same day each week such show should be monitored for five weeks in June.

Quantitative Monitoring

1. The purpose of the quantitative monitoring is to measure the involvement of men and women in radio talk shows and to highlight any disparities that may exist in this involvement (in the 3 categories: hosts, guests and callers) and to establish which topics women get involved in and which not.
2. The Quantitative Monitoring Form should be completed for each talk show monitored, i.e. 5 talk shows thus 5 quantitative monitoring sheets.
 - Monitor 5 radio talk shows over a staggered week as per the above schedule. The same show should be monitored for the whole period.
 - Record basic information – radio station, date, time start, time finish.
 - Record the topic:
 - Specific and general, eg. Specific topic – family murders and suicides; general topic – gender violence
 - Gender specific or general
 - Count presenters/ hosts – male/ female
 - Count guests/ panel members – male/ female. What are their occupations?
 - Count callers – male/ female
 - Monitors should use the space provided on the quantitative form to make any notes which will be used in the qualitative analysis of the talk show.
3. The Summary Sheet should be completed for each radio station, and is a summary of the 5 talk shows monitored, i.e. 1 summary sheet for 5 talk shows monitored – this will yield an overall summary for the period monitored for the particular radio station monitored.

Qualitative Monitoring - This consists of three parts:

1) Comments on each programme monitored

Monitors should fill out Qualitative Analysis, for each radio show monitored; this will be an overall analysis of the talk show monitored

Monitors need to look out for

1. Topics:

- Which topics do women and men tend to engage with more and which not?
- Are the topics relevant?
- Are gender issues covered? If so, is this done in a positive and balanced way or is it just women speaking on women's issues.
- Do men contribute to gender debates? Do they do so in a progressive way?
- Are the gender angles to issues interrogated?

2. Host:

- Is the host fair and neutral.
- Does the host interrupt or intimidate callers or guests?
- Does the host treat women and men in the same way?
- If there are few women calling in, does the host make a point of encouraging women to call in?

3. Guests:

- Who is called as a guest, is there a balance between women and men?
- In what capacity are the guests called, eg. Professional, expert, person affected, family member etc.
- Is equal respect given to both men and women guests i.e is there any difference in the way that women and men are addressed on the show?
- What do the guests have to say, is it relevant, are the actual issues addressed or missed?

4. Callers

- Are men and women callers treated with equal respect, i.e is there any difference in the way that women and men are addressed on the show?
- What do the callers have to say?
- Are there differences in the kinds of issues that women and men respond to and the way that raise them?

5. Language:

- Are there gender insensitive remarks/ jokes, and if so by whom?
- Is sexist language used and if so by whom?

2) Interviews with hosts of talk shows

Monitors should interview the hosts of the radio talk shows that they monitored (Refer to **Annex 2**: Semi-structured questionnaire).

3) Survey of listeners

Interviews with listeners are to take place – monitors are to interview 20 people who listen to the show that they are monitoring, they should interview 10 women and 10 men (Refer to **Annex 3**: Questionnaire for listeners of radio talk shows).

Annex Two: Semi-structured questionnaire for talk show hosts**Listeners**

1. Do you have statistics on, or could you estimate what proportion of women and men listen to your show?
2. Would you like to achieve greater gender balance in your listenership? How can this be achieved?

Guests

3. Please could you give an explanation of how do you decide on the guests that you invite to the show?
4. Do you strive to achieve gender balance in doing so?
5. Do you encounter problems in getting women as guests and if so how do you overcome this?

Callers

6. Do you know what proportion of women and men call into your show or could you estimate?
7. Do you think that your personal style encourages or discourages women from calling and speaking their mind?

Topics

8. How do you decide on the topics that are discussed on the talk show?
9. Have you tried to integrate gender issues into your talk shows? If so what kind of response has this received?

Feedback on findings

10. After asking the above questions, present the host with the actual findings for their media station and ask:
11. Are you surprised by these findings?
12. Any further comments?

Annex Three: Questionnaire for listeners of radio talk shows

Name: _____

Age: _____

Sex: _____

Female

Male

Country: _____

Question

Do you listen to _____ radio talk show?

1. What kinds of topics do you like to listen to the most on radio talk shows? Tick one only.

- Current affairs (like politics).
- Social issues (like health, HIV/AIDS, education).
- Entertainment.
- Sports.
- Business and the economy.
- Women's empowerment and gender equality.
- Other

2. Have you ever called into this show?

- Yes, a few times.
- Yes, many times.
- No, never.

3. Is the host on your this show

- Female.
- Male.
- Sometimes changes.

4. When you call in do you feel that the host

- Encourages you to speak your mind.
- Discourages you from speaking your mind.
- Tries to influence what you say.
- Makes no difference to what you say.

5. In general, who do you think calls in to this show:

More women than men.

More men than women.

Not sure

6. Which of the statements below do you agree with the most? Chose one:

Radio talk shows would be more interesting if more women called in.

Radio talk shows would be more interesting if more men called in.

It makes no difference to radio talk shows whether it is women or men calling in.

Comments

Please record here any pertinent comments or quotes made by your interviewees.

Annex 4: List of interviewees

1. M Motanyane – Radio Lesotho
2. Brian Banda – Capital Radio
3. Simon Pashoma Ncube – Radio Zimbabwe
4. John Perlman and Steven Lang – SAFM