



Namibia Broadcasting Corporation journalists in one of the NBC newsrooms.

Photo: Sikhonzile Ndlovu

GENDER IN NEWSROOMS

The *Glass Ceilings* Study (2009) which explored the institutional composition of media houses in Southern Africa revealed that in Namibia women make up only 40% of the staff in media houses; 42% of those in top management and 35% of those in senior management. The study also showed that women are more likely to be assigned to soft beats rather than men.

To the extent that the GMPS monitored news content, it gives us only a glimpse at those who create the news in so far as they are reflected in news content as reporters, presenters and writers. However, it is useful to cross reference the findings of the *Glass Ceilings* research with the GMPS. This chapter also makes important links between those who create the news and content, such as whether women journalists access more women sources, and whether having more women in management and as reporters makes a difference?

Reporters

The *Glass Ceilings* report that encompassed all media employees (including management, administration, technical and other backroom workers) found that women constituted 40% of the total. As illustrated in figure 4.1, the GMPS which only reflects journalists, shows that in Namibia women constitute 42% of reporters. Figure 4.2 shows that across the region women constitute 28% of those who report on the news.

Namibia (42%) comes second after Seychelles (61%). Zimbabwe (14%) has the lowest proportion of women reporters. This figure is consistent with the *Glass Ceilings* that also found that Zimbabwe had the lowest proportion of women employees.

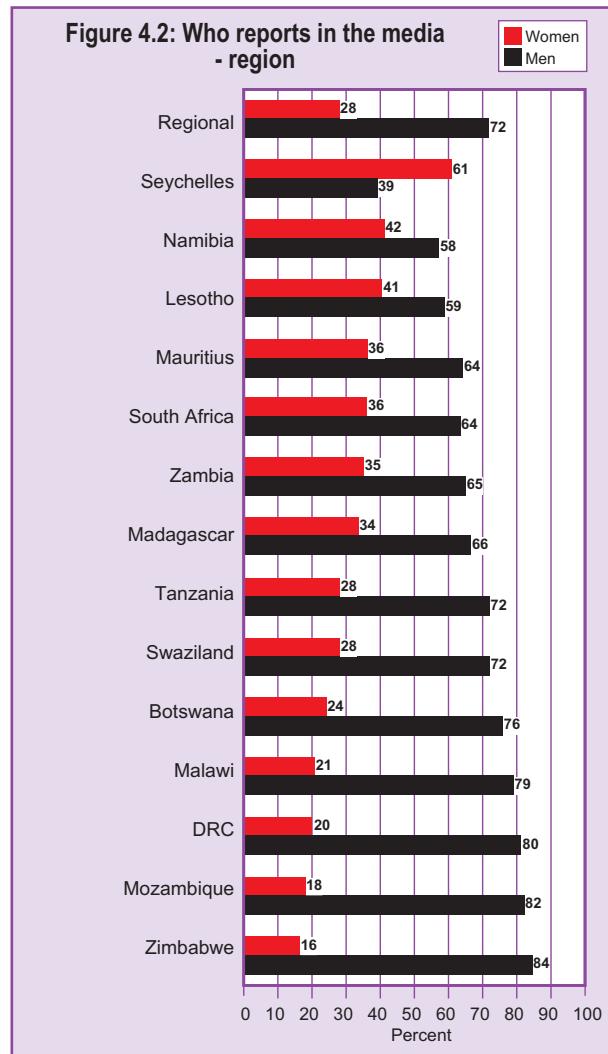
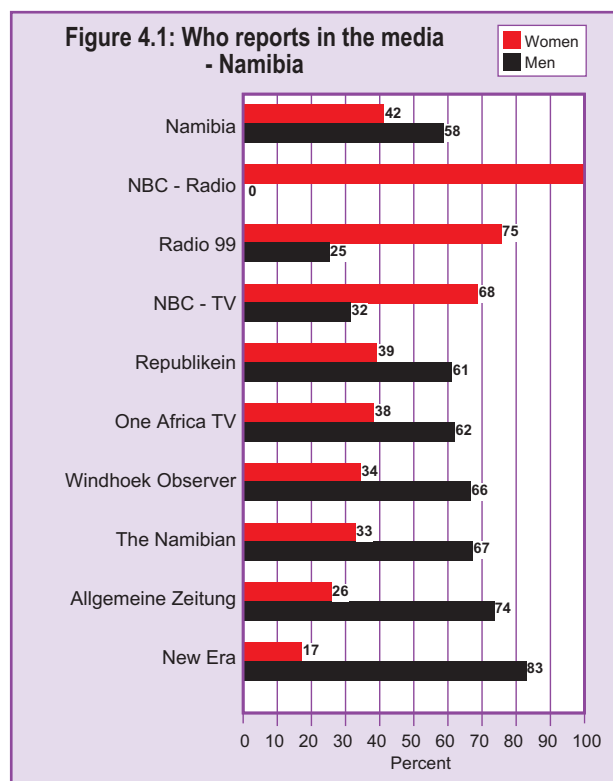


Figure 4.3 concerns the stories covered by women and men in Namibia and figure 4.4 gives comparative data for the region. There has been a shift in the types of beats covered by women and men. Because these findings are based on actual coverage as opposed to editors saying which beats reporters are assigned to in the *Glass Ceilings* (this is something of a transient feature) the GMPS data on beats is more accurate.

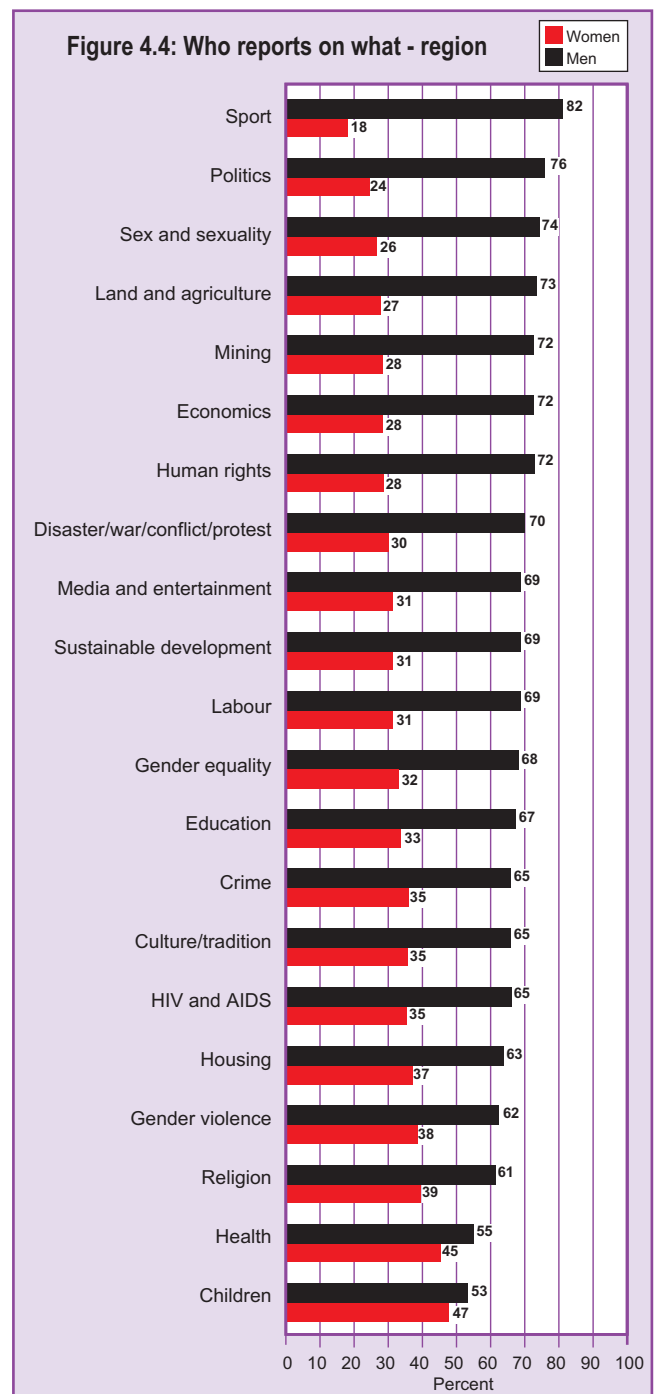
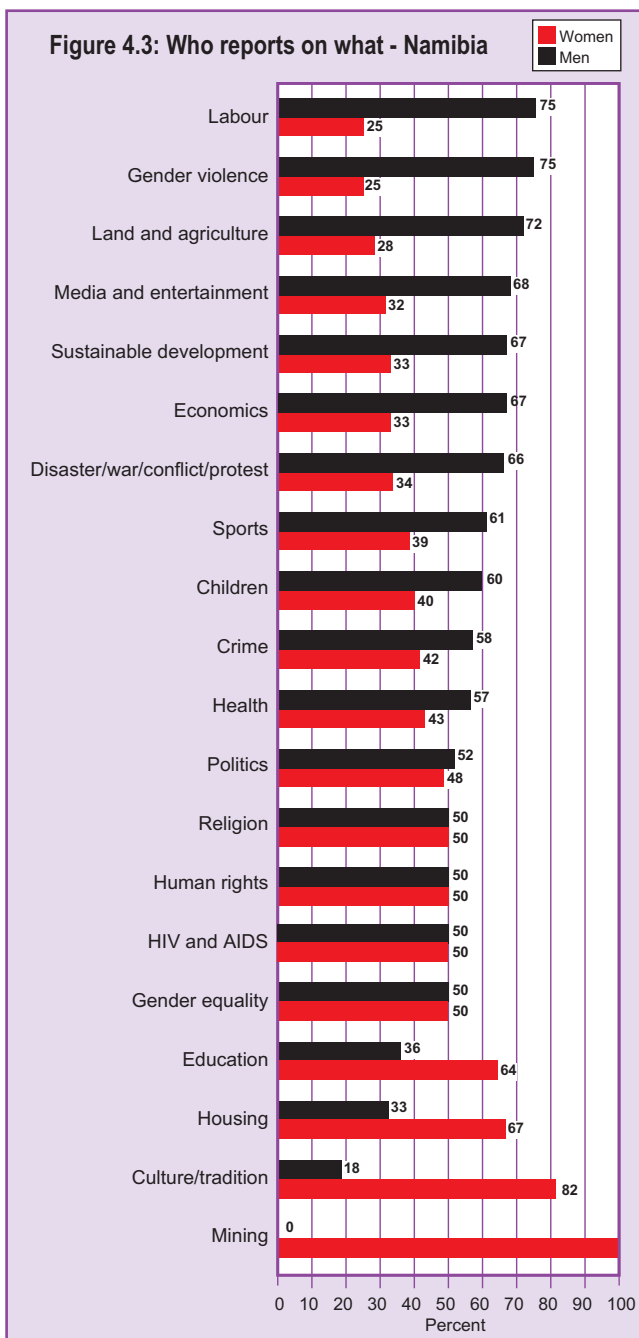
The Namibia graph - a Y as opposed to the V for the region - reflects some interesting gender benders. For example men make up 75% of those reporting on gender violence and 50% of those covering gender equality.

Women have also moved from traditional beats to cover topics such as mining, (100%). Chances of women reporting on gender equality, human rights, HIV and AIDS and religion are the same as those of men covering such beats. However, topics such as economics, sports and crime are covered mostly by men reporters.

Men reporters in the region are also covering topics traditionally seen as women's or soft issues. Men reporters cover topics such as children, health,

housing and gender violence making up 62% of reporters. In the past gender violence has been mostly reported on by women. Sex and sexuality is a topic covered by men reporters more than women.

Across the region, reflecting the low proportion of women reporters generally, men are the majority of those reporting on all beats. However, they are more heavily concentrated in the soft than the hard beats.



Beats over time

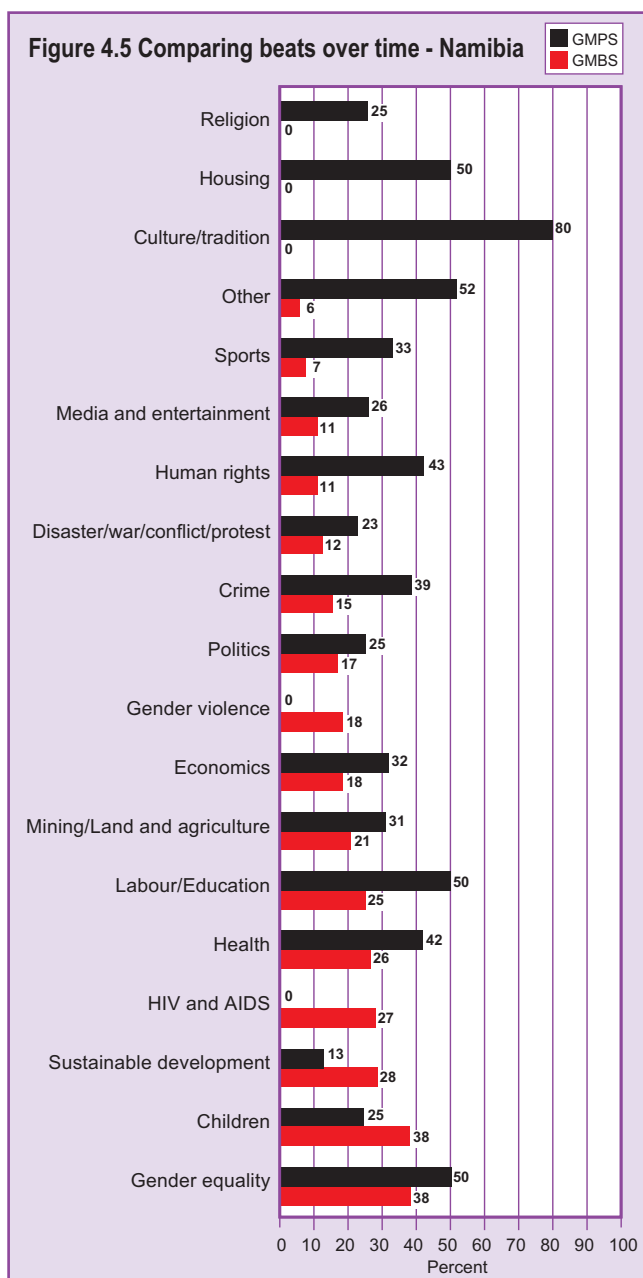
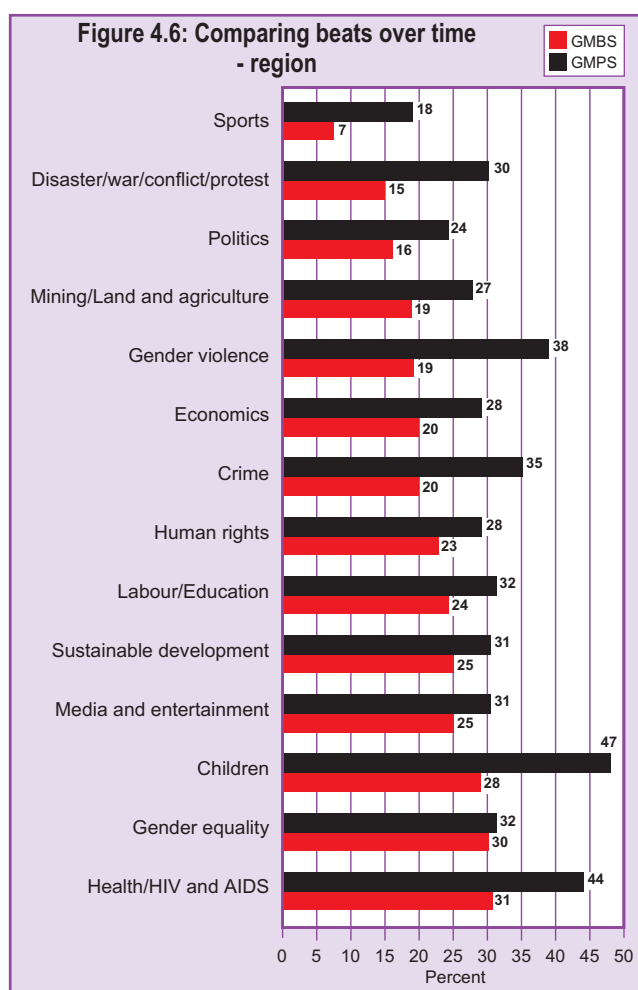


Figure 4.5 shows that there has been a marked shift in the types of beats that are covered by women in Namibia since the GMBS. They have significantly moved away from concentrating on 'soft' beats to cover more hard news. The proportion of women journalists covering topics such as politics, economics, labour and education, crime and sports has visibly increased.

The proportion of women reporters on politics has increased from 17% to 25%; in sports from 7% to 33%; crime from 15% to 39% and labour and education from 25% to 50%.

There has also been a decline in the proportion of women reporting on children and gender equality meaning that male reporters are now reporting on these topics more than they did seven years ago. This is an indication that male reporters no longer see these as women's issues.

Figure 4.6 shows that the proportion of women reporters has increased across all beats in the region. In particular the proportion of women covering sports has increased from 7% to 18%. These changes are beginning to break down the gender division of labour in newsroom.



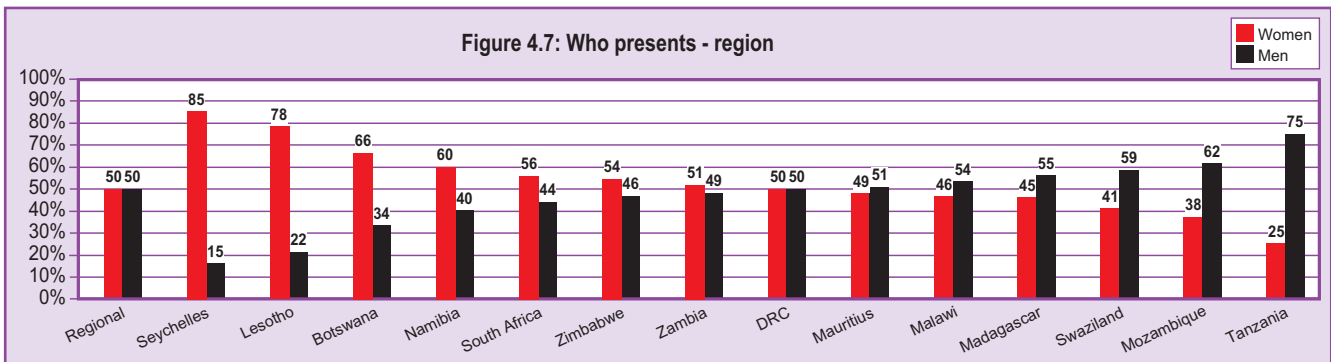
Reporters and presenters

Table eight provides a breakdown of the number of women presenters in television and radio as well as the number of women reporters in television, radio and print media in Zimbabwe and the region. As in the past, there is still definite predominance of women as presenters in television and radio.

The highest proportion of women is in the radio presenter category. At 52% Namibia has a significantly higher proportion of women as radio presenters than the regional average of 41%. The finding for radio reporters is significantly higher at 75% women compared to 30% in the region.

The low proportion of women reporters (32%) in the print media in Namibia is of concern. This is mirrored in the region where women constitute 25% of those recorded in the print media during the monitoring period.

Category	% Namibia	% Region
TV presenters	62	58
Radio presenters	52	41
TV reporters	58	42
Radio reporters	75	30
Print reporters	32	25



As in the case of the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) which found that women constitute 52% of presenters, the GMPS found there are equal proportions of women and men presenters in the region (see Figure 4.7). In Namibia, female presenters account for 60% of the total. At 85%, Seychelles has the highest proportion of women presenters followed by

Lesotho with 78% and Botswana with 66%. Tanzania has the lowest figure (25%). The findings on women presenters (compared to print reporters who comprise 32% of the total in Namibia and 25% regionally) underscore the fact that within the media women are still valued more for their physical than intellectual attributes.

Making a difference?

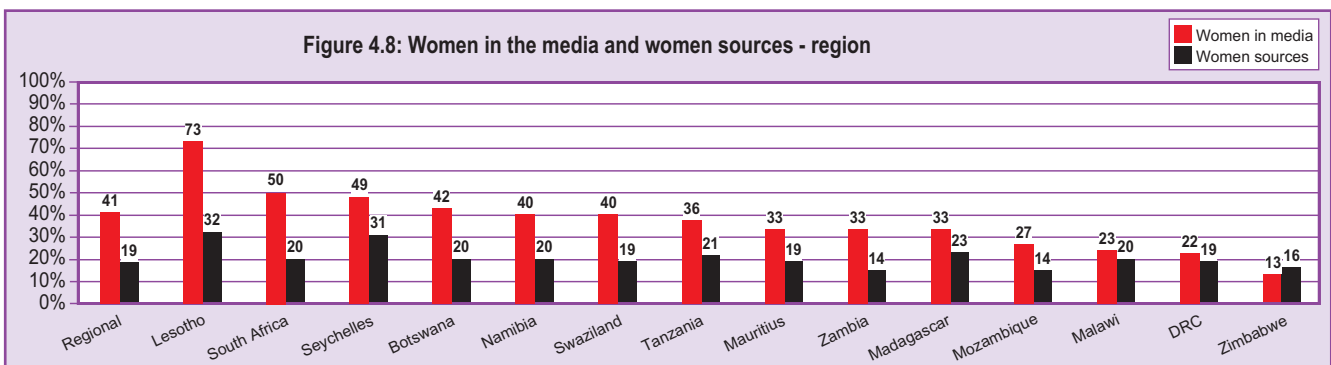


Figure 4.8 compares the data in the *Glass Ceilings* on the overall presence of women in media houses with the proportion of women sources for each country. This shows that having more women in the media does not necessarily result in a higher proportion of women sources.

While the proportion of women in media in the region is 41%, women contribute 19% of sources. Namibia has 40% women in media and 20% women news sources. The presence of women in media is not an end in itself. There is need to raise gender awareness and change mindsets of the women and men who work in the media in the region.

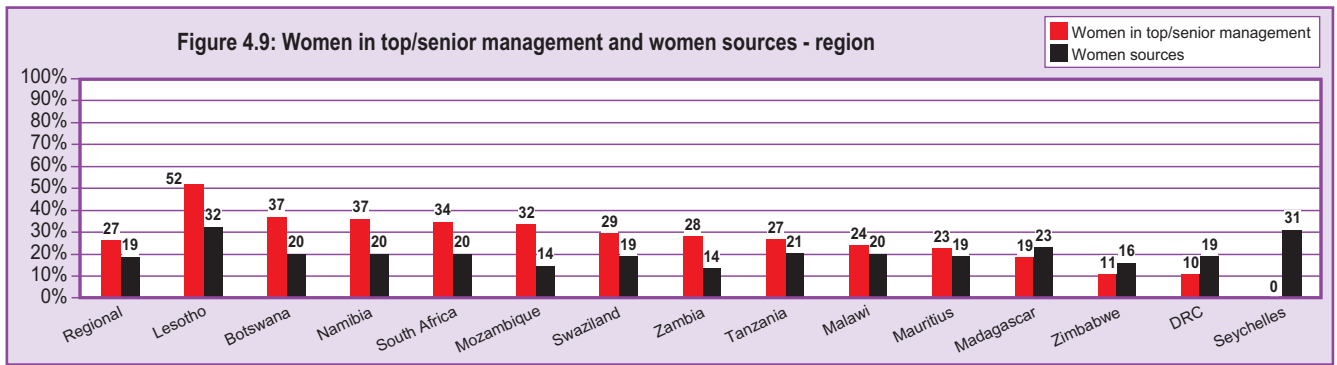


Figure 4.9 compares the proportion of women in top/senior and management positions in the *Glass Ceiling* to the proportion of women sources and also finds that there is no direct correlation. Across the region, women constitute 27% of decision-makers but only 19% of women sources. Seychelles has no women in top/senior management positions but still has the second highest proportion of women sources in the region. In Namibia, women make up 37% of those in decision-making positions but only 20% women sources.



In one of the most important revelations of this study, however, figure 4.10 shows that women reporters are more likely to access women sources more than men. A measure designed by the global GMMP and used in the regional study for the first time, the research found that across the region women sources account for 31% of the total in stories reported by women, as opposed to 15% in the case of men. The comparative figures globally are 26% for women and 19% for men. In Namibia, the contrast is even more stark: 41% in the case of women journalists and 9% in the case of male journalists. These findings suggest that while increasing the proportion of women in the media overall and the proportion of women managers specifically makes little difference to gender responsiveness of news content, increasing the presence of women *journalists* in the media does make a difference.

Conclusions

During the consultative workshop, editor of *Republikein* Estelle de Bruyn highlighted that being a woman in a senior position comes with its own challenges. There is always a conscious effort not

to portray oneself as overly supportive of the gender cause. She highlighted that she would not want people to think she was got the position because she is a woman.

De Bruyn stressed the need to move away from 'tokenism' or women being appointed to certain positions just to balance the numbers. She says she holds the positions she holds because she deserves it and has worked for it. However she said that her paper always thrives to represent all sections of society.

A sub-editor from the Namibia Press Agency (Nampa) made the point that men in the media are just as capable of mainstreaming gender in their coverage. He said that women alone cannot change the masculine nature of news as men also have a part to play.

The findings of the GMPS show that the rigid gender stereotypes in newsrooms are gradually being challenged. Having more women reporters does result in greater gender balance and sensitivity. This needs to be reinforced through policy, training and gender awareness.