



Clement Daniels, Namibia's Media Ombudsman and Karuaihe-Upi Ngamane, research officer at MISA Namibia at a GMDC seminar in Namibia.

Photo: Sikhonzile Ndlovu

● **COVERAGE OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE**

The prevalence of gender based violence (GBV) in Southern Africa is very high. Countries such as South Africa have amongst the highest levels of sexual violence in the world. The media has a critical role to play in reducing the levels of GBV by covering stories that promote prevention and ensuring that people who experience violence receive effective care and support. More often than not the media is part of the problem rather than of the solution. Yet the media has a huge potential role to play in changing attitudes, perceptions, and mindsets where gender violence is concerned.

Over the last decade, GL has conducted training workshops with the media in 12 SADC countries and all nine provinces of South Africa. GL and GEMSA have trained gender activists on strategic communications making use of the Sixteen Days of Activism campaign that extends from International Day of No Violence Against Women on 25 December to Human Rights Day on 10 December.



Coverage of gender violence has been monitored in the regional and global studies. GL has also worked with GEMSA chapters in conducting periodic monitoring of the Sixteen Days of Activism campaign. Key findings emerging from these studies are that:

- To the extent gender issues are covered, gender violence tends to get more coverage. In the GMBS, gender specific issues constituted 2% of

all coverage, with GBV constituting half of this or 1% of the total.

- However, gender violence is often treated as relatively minor compared to other kinds of crime.
- Certain types of gender violence get much higher coverage, e.g. sexual assault.
- There is very little coverage of where those affected can get help.
- There is very little coverage of those who protest against gender violence.
- Much of the source information is from the courts. This has a heavy male bias.
- The voices of those affected are not heard.
- Experiences of women are often trivialised.
- Coverage is often insensitive, for example in the use of images, names etc that could lead to secondary victimisation.
- Women are often portrayed as victims rather than survivors.
- Women are often portrayed as temptress (asked for it to happen).
- Men are portrayed as being unable to control their sexual urges.
- There is a tendency to exonerate the perpetrators.
- There is a tendency to sensationalise.
- Most gender violence stories are written by men/court reporters.

This chapter examines the media's coverage of gender based violence (GBV) compared to other topics. It also looks at the GBV sub topics; who speaks on them; their function and who reports on these topics.

Figure 5.1: Proportion of stories on GBV - Namibia

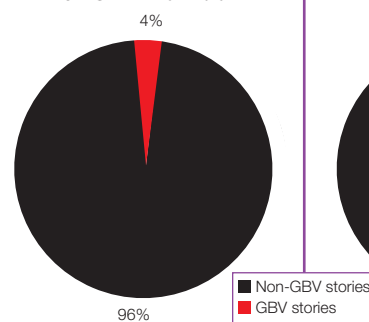
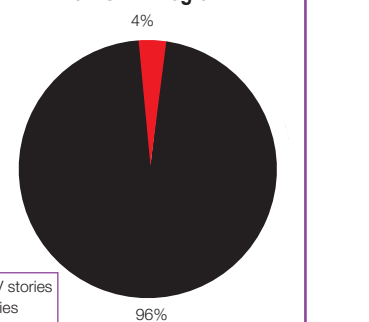


Figure 5.2: Proportion of stories on GBV - region



The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development calls on SADC member states to halve the current levels of gender based violence by 2015. Figure 5.1 (Namibia) and figure 5.2 (region) show that GBV stories and stories that mention GBV constitute only 4% of all coverage in Namibian and regional media despite the high levels of gender violence.

Sub topics

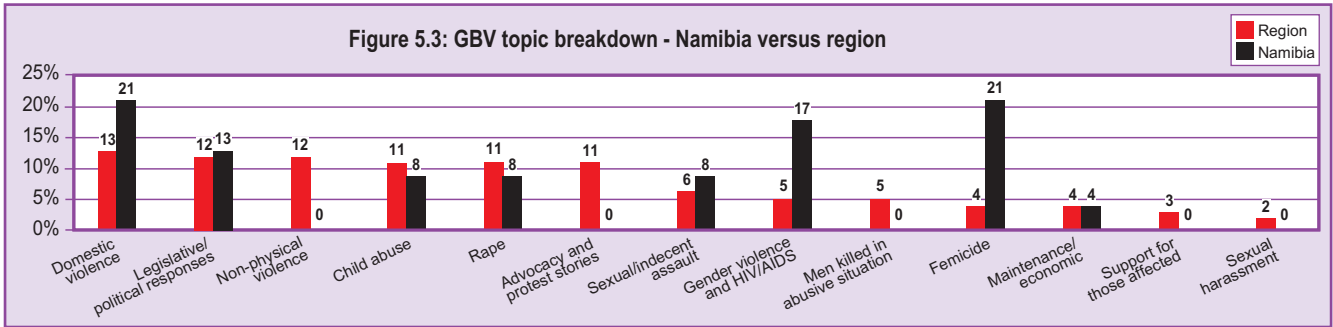
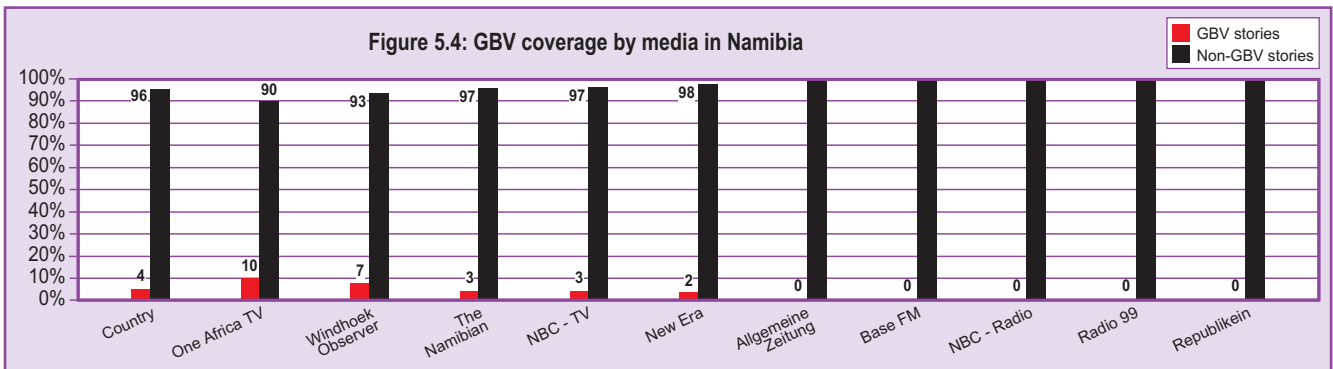


Figure 5.3 shows that domestic violence receives the most coverage in Namibian media followed by legislative stories and political responses. These findings are in line with research on gender based violence which have revealed that most gender based violence takes place in the confines of the home. Femicide also receives the same coverage as domestic violence at 21%. Gender violence and HIV and AIDS follow at 17%. Sexual harassment stories are missing in Namibian coverage.

Regional coverage of these sub-topics is significantly lower than Namibia. For example domestic violence constitutes only 13% of sub-topics followed by legislative and political responses at 12%. Sexual harassment receives minimal coverage at 2%. Support for affected people is also marginal at 4%. There is a wider spread of coverage in the region than in Namibia.



Only five out of the ten media surveyed in Namibia reported on gender based violence during the entire monitoring period. There were no such

reports in all three radio stations. *One Africa TV* had the highest proportion of stories making up 10% of the total, followed by *Windhoek Observer* (7%).

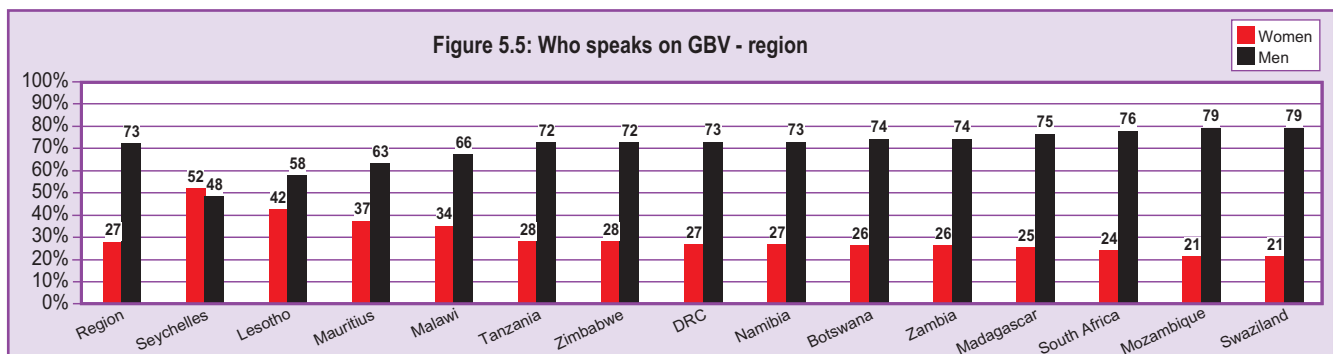


Figure 5.5 shows that men dominate as news sources in gender based violence stories in the region. The regional percentage of women sources is 27%, which is 1% higher than Namibia's average of 26%. Seychelles is the only country in the region

with a higher proportion of women than male sources on GBV (52%) representation. Women's voices are least heard in this topic in Swaziland and Mozambique (21% and 22% respectively).

Who speaks on what?

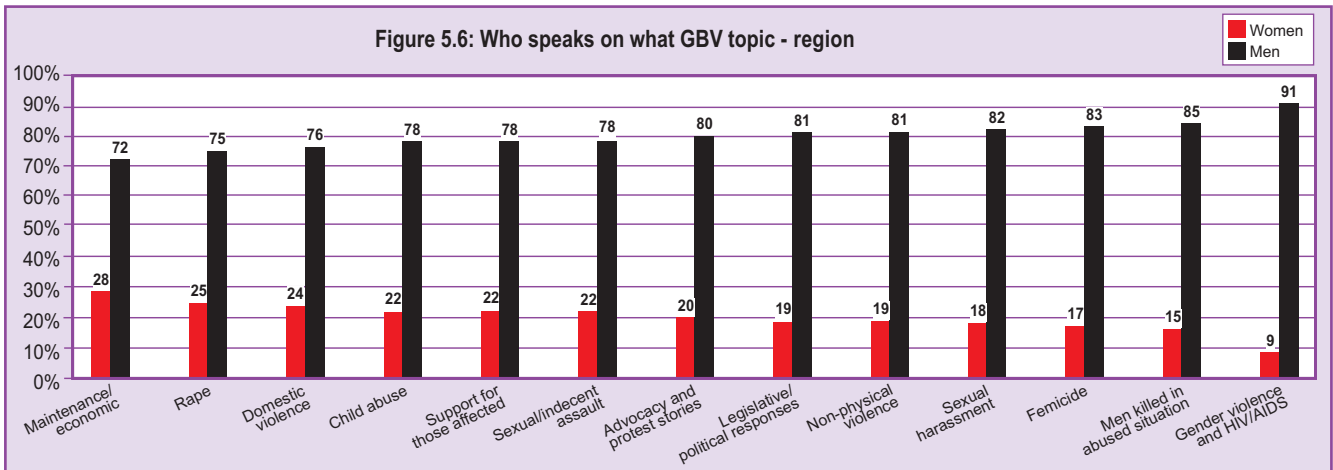
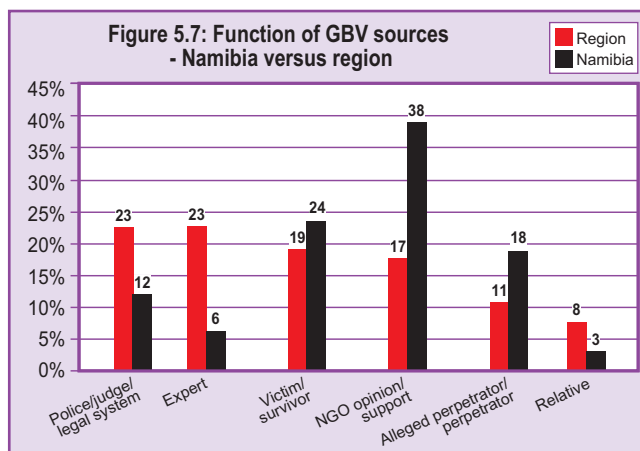


Figure 5.6 shows that men sources dominate across all sub-topics in the region. Women are better represented as sources on maintenance and economic stories (28%) followed by rape (25%). Women speak less on gender violence and HIV and AIDS. This is despite them constituting a high proportion as victims/survivors.

Function of GBV sources



The voices of police/judges, the legal system and experts dominate in GBV coverage in the region. In Namibia, NGO opinions and the voices of victims/survivors (24%) is higher than in the region

(19%). Perpetrators constitute 18% of sources in Namibia, 6% lower than victims but higher than the regional average of 11%.

Who reports on GBV?

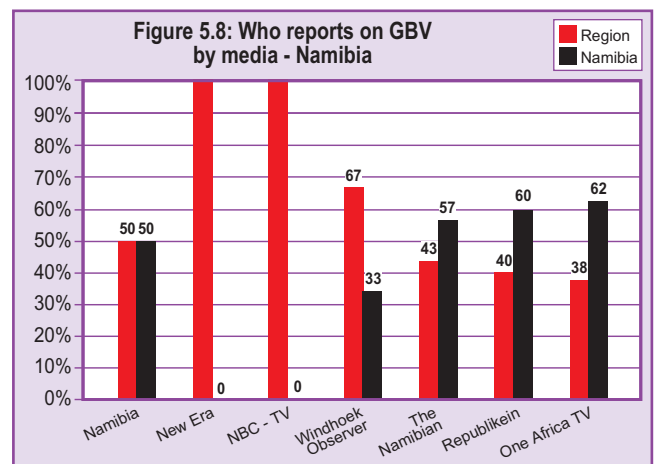


Figure 5.8 shows that there is an equal proportion of women and men reporters on GBV. However proportions differ significantly across media houses. For example in *New Era* and *NBC TV*, all those who reported GBV were female. *Windhoek Observer* has more female than male GBV reporters. *One Africa TV* (63%) and *The Namibian* at 57% have more men reporters than women reporters on this topic.

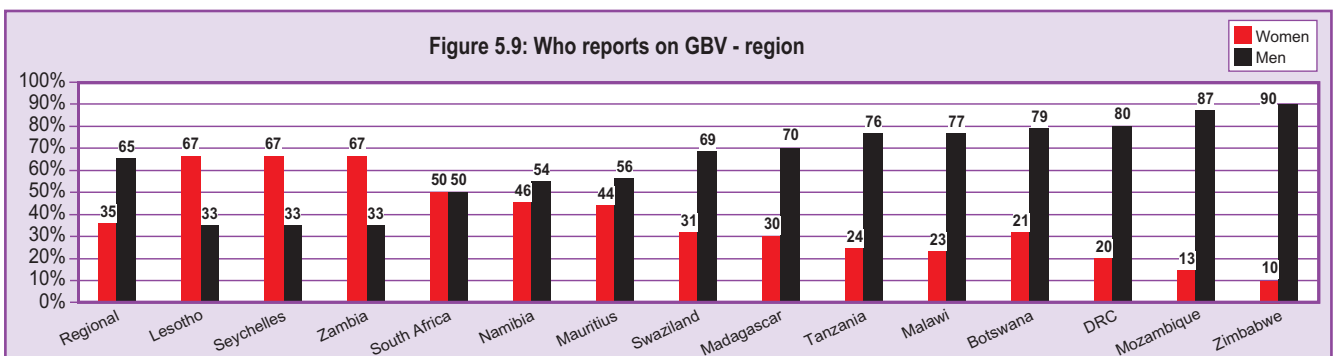


Figure 5.9 shows that men make up 65% of all reporters on GBV in the region. In Namibia the proportion of women reporters (46%) is lower than that of men. Lesotho, Seychelles and Zambia have the highest percentage of women reporters on GBV at 67%. They are followed by South Africa which has the same number of women and men reporters. Men dominate in the rest of the countries with Zimbabwe recording the highest proportion (90%) followed by Mozambique at 87% and DRC at 80%. These figures are consistent with the low proportion of women reporters overall in these countries.

How gender violence is covered

The qualitative monitoring yielded examples of how GBV is covered.

An example from the Namibian media is an article entitled "Alleged double murderer Dausab in court today" *New Era*, 5 November 2009. The article concerns an upcoming court appearance of an alleged murderer, Julius Dausab, charged for allegedly killing his former girlfriend and her mother.

Dausab is reported to have acquired the services of a top Windhoek lawyer in preparation for the upcoming court case. This story is about Dausab's first appearance at the high court after he went on a rampage and killed the two women.

Like most GBV stories this emanates from a court case and is told from the perspective of a perpetrator. Court records are used to map the story and a public prosecutor, Felicitia Sikerete, is quoted. The court records give a clear understanding of the events that led to the murders. They give a chronological sense of the events. The article maps the legal procedure and the records illustrate the trauma and atrocity of the murder.

The article highlights the violence meted against the two women but does not quote anyone near to them. The author narrates the events in which a mother and daughter are killed, allegedly by the

daughter's boyfriend. According to the report the boyfriend, Dausab, shot the women with a hunting rifle after the girlfriend ended her relationship and moved back to live with her mother. The writer details how the boyfriend returns to his former girlfriend, apparently in an attempt to reconcile, shoots the mother in the chest and severely beats before shooting his former partner.

Although the reader is left in no doubt about the brutality of the act, there is a degree of sympathy for the perpetrator in the way the story is told (he was jilted, is taking revenge, etc). The human rights dimensions of this act are not explored. No women's rights groups are interviewed. The story does not provide any context, for example an explanation of femicide, how frequently this occurs in Namibia, and what kind of sentence might be expected. The regional target of halving gender violence by 2015 is not mentioned.

This like many GBV stories is a cold, factual court case of another two women murdered that does little to lead us to redress, recourse and the societal outrage so important to ending such senseless human rights abuses.

Conclusions

Participants in the consultative workshop concurred that coverage of gender based violence in Namibia is not a true reflection of the reality on the ground. Some argued that the fewer reports on GBV are as a result of journalists failing to go out into the communities and establishing the issues that they grapple with.

Alleged double murderer Dausab in court today

WINDHOEK – Otjiwarongo resident Julius "Mamb" Dausab, who in June this year went on a shooting rampage and allegedly killed two women in the Ovintoto area, is scheduled to make his first appearance in the High Court today.

The 38-year-old Dausab made his fourth appearance in the Okahandja magistrate's court on October 22, and as told that his double murder case was to be transferred to the High Court in Windhoek for first pre-trial hearing on November 5.

Dausab has in the meantime also acquired the services of prominent Windhoek-based lawyer Andre Louw to defend him. The same lawyer represented Dausab in the Okahandja magistrate's court last month.

Okahandja-based public prosecutor Felicitia Sikerete revealed the transfer of the case to Nampia in a telephonic interview last month.

Dausab was again remanded in police custody at the Windhoek Central Prison's holding cells until his next appearance in court.

At the beginning of June this year, Dausab allegedly killed his girlfriend Paulina Kenamuni, 28, and her mother Elfrieda Kenamuni by shooting them with a hunting rifle at the Okandjira Post in the Ovintoto area of the Otjozondjupa Region.

Paulina Kenamuni, who used to live with Dausab at Otjiwarongo, is said to have ended her relationship with Dausab before she moved back to Ovintoto, and this allegedly triggered the tragedy.

The incident happened at the shack belonging to Paulina Kenamuni's mother at the Okandjira Post in the Ovintoto area one Thursday morning in June this year.

She had just left Dausab at Otjiwarongo, and moved in with her mother at Ovintoto.

The accused allegedly drove from Otjiwarongo to his girlfriend's parents' home at the Okandjira Post in an apparent attempt at reconciliation.

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Participants from the Namibian Ministries of Gender and Ministry of Justice. Photo: Sikhonzile Ndlovu

They linked inadequate coverage of GBV with the need to improve community journalism in Namibia, where most news stories are national, international or regional.

Participants expressed doubts about Namibia's ability to meet the target of halving GBV by 2015 and called on the government to take the lead in

fighting this social ill. They also agreed that continuous training of the media on covering GBV is required. The innovative "I" Story project to get women to tell their own stories and have these published in the mainstream media is one concrete way of ensuring that more stories are told from the perspective of survivors.