

HIV/AIDS Treatment Plan Now

Treat
the
People!

Produce Generic Anti-Retrovirals Now

TREATMENT ACTION CAMPAIGN

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HIV and AIDS coverage needs to move from general coverage to more specific coverage on topics such as care and support.

Photo: Gender Links

HIV AND AIDS AND THE MEDIA

Other than gender, another major cross-cutting concern for the media in the region is the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Internally this has had devastating consequences for many media houses whose staff have been directly and indirectly affected. The media also has a major role to play in educating the public on HIV and AIDS as well as its gender dimensions.

The chapter explores the extent of HIV and AIDS coverage as opposed to the coverage of other news stories. This includes looking at topics, genres, origin, geographic scope, function of sources and who reports on HIV and AIDS. The topics are broken down into different sub-topics to give insight into the most reported categories.

The chapter serves as a benchmark of progress against the 2006 HIV and AIDS and Gender Baseline Study. The study formed part of the Media Action Plan on HIV and AIDS and Gender led by the Southern African Editor's Forum that led to an extensive roll-out of policies with media houses and newsrooms across the region. These policies covered the work place, but also sought to improve the quantity and quality of coverage on HIV and

AIDS from a gender perspective. *Kaya FM* is one of the media houses that developed an HIV and AIDS policy in South Africa.

Quantity of HIV and AIDS coverage

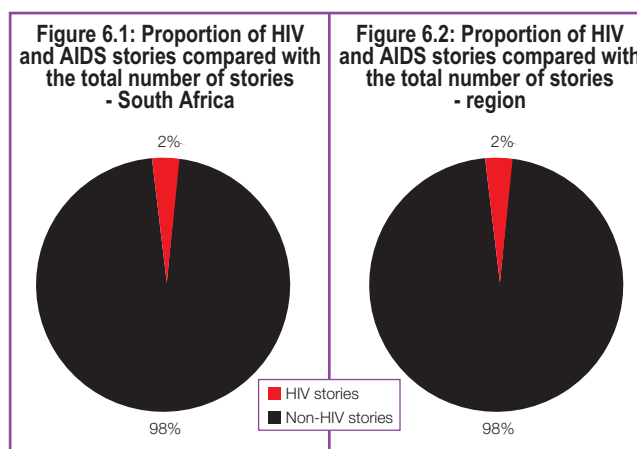
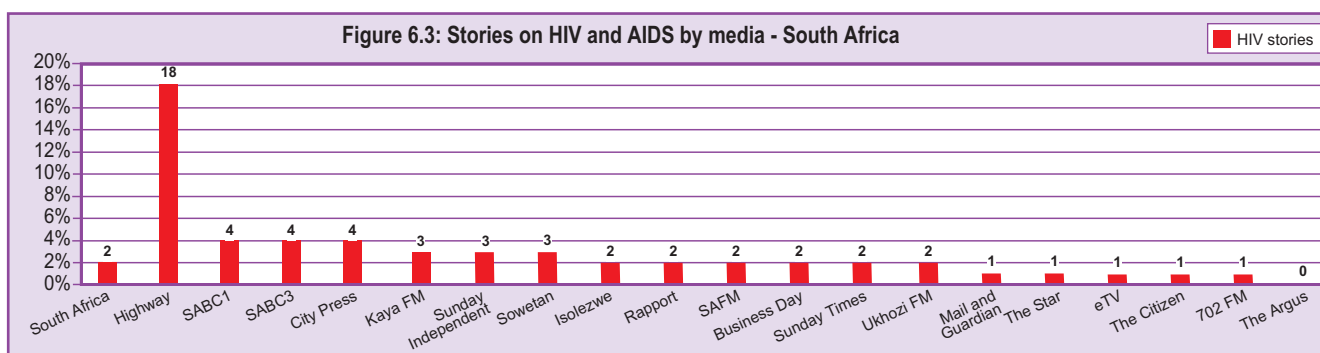


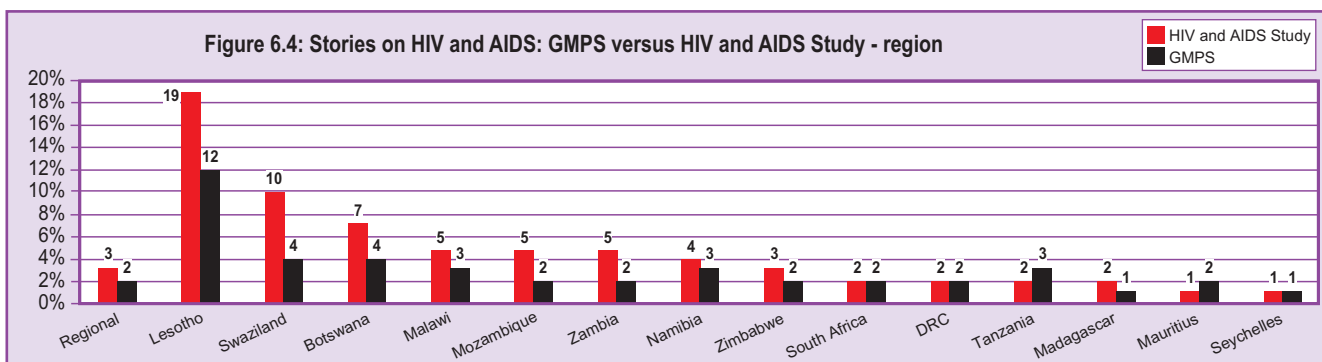
Figure 6.1 shows that HIV and AIDS stories and stories that mention HIV and AIDS make up only 2% of all topics covered by media in South Africa and the region. This is low compared to the high rates of infection in the country.



There are variations across media houses. HIV and AIDS stories account for 18% of *Highway Radio's* coverage. This is followed by low proportions of coverage at other media entities. HIV and AIDS constituted 4% of coverage in *SABC 1*, *SABC 3* and *City Press*. *The Argus* did not cover any HIV and AIDS stories during the monitoring period. *Kaya FM* was the only media house that was part of the MAP project and their coverage HIV and AIDS constituted 3%.

Radio 702, *Isolezwe*, *The Argus*, *The Citizen*, *Business Day*, *Highway Radio* and *SAFM* had no coverage on HIV and AIDS during the monitoring period.

It should be emphasised that one of the limitations of the monitoring is that it covered only news. Increasingly, topics like living positively with HIV and AIDS are covered in other kinds of programming, such as talk shows. But as news is the dominating genre of the media, it is disappointing to find so little news coverage of HIV and AIDS in many media houses.



There has been a slight decline in the coverage of HIV and AIDS in the region since the 2006 HIV and AIDS, Gender and the Media Baseline Study. The regional average dropped from three to two percent. Tanzania and Mauritius are the only two countries that registered increases in the proportion of coverage. South Africa remained at 2% coverage of HIV and AIDS. Namibia regressed from 4% to 3%. Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana recorded the highest losses. Lesotho dropped from 19% to 12%.

In the region and in South Africa a concern has been raised concerning HIV and AIDS fatigue. This may account for the decline in coverage. Editors emphasised the need to examine quality versus quantity and to cover the pandemic in more innovative ways, which may account for less coverage in the news and more coverage in other kinds of programming. Qualitative aspects will also be discussed in greater depth in subsequent sections of this chapter.

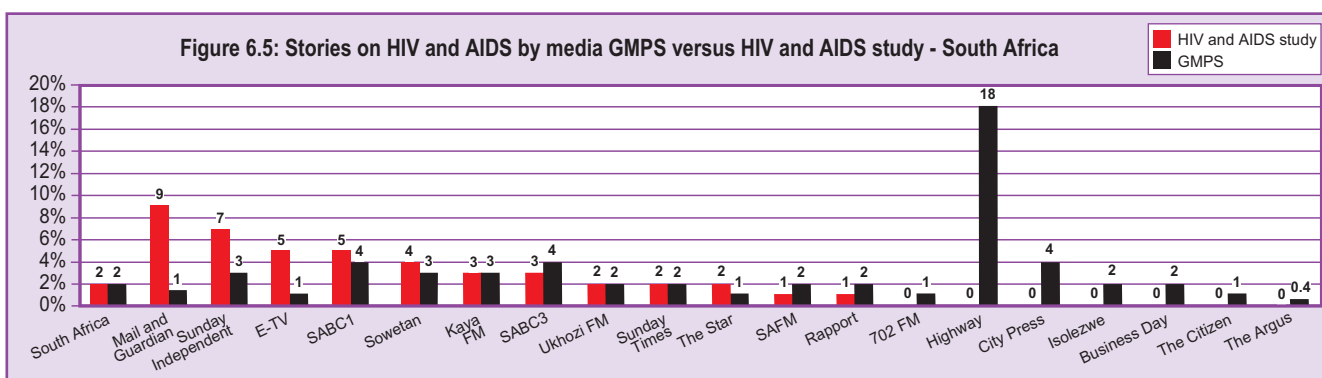
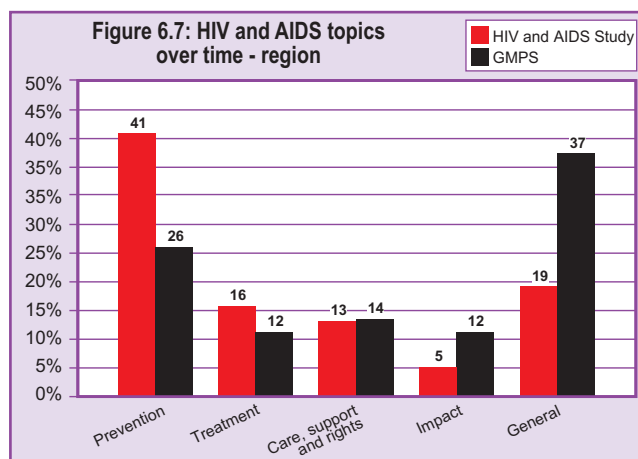
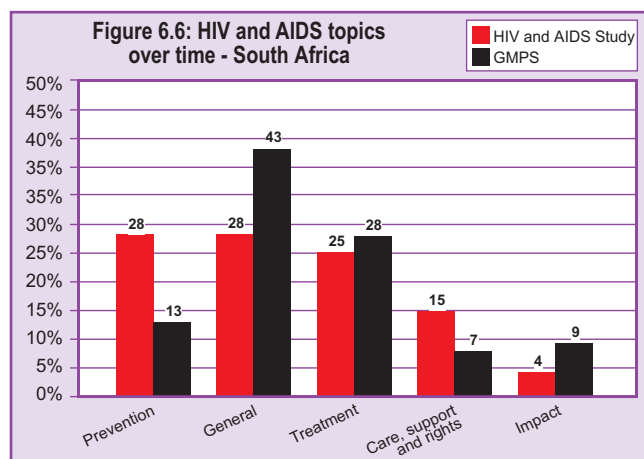


Figure 6.5 shows that there has been a decline at most media houses that were part of the HIV and AIDS Study of 2006. There have been substantial drops in coverage in the *Mail & Guardian* and the *Sunday Independent*, they have dropped from 9% to 1% and 7% to 3% respectively. There has been a one percentage point increase in the coverage of HIV and AIDS in *SAFM* and *Rapport*.



HIV and AIDS Topics

Prevention

- Prevention strategies, methods, techniques to prevent HIV;
- The role of gender power relations in fuelling the pandemic;
- The intersection between gender violence and HIV/AIDS;
- Cultural practices (such as virginity testing) and HIV;

- Research into preventative methods and technologies;
- Harm reduction programmes.

Treatment

- Treatment and/or care of people affected by HIV;
- Access or roll-out of anti-retrovirals, their use, and efficacy;

Care, support and environment

- HIV and human rights-related issues;
- Legal rights of people living with HIV;
- Care work and its gendered dimension;
- Orphans and vulnerable children affected by HIV.

Impact of the pandemic

- Macro-economic impact of HIV;
- Micro-economic impact of HIV on the work place or the community;
- Impact of HIV on different sectors, for example, the media, agriculture, mining, the environment, civil society;
- Impact of HIV on an individual level.

General

- People living with or affected by HIV;
- Profiles of people in the HIV field or people affected by HIV;
- Government policies on HIV;
- The role of regional and international bodies in HIV/AIDS;
- Research and statistical findings on HIV, the impact of the pandemic, mortality rates, infection rates, etc.
- HIV/AIDS and the economy, poverty;
- Drugs and needle exchange.

The most marked shift in coverage of topics on HIV and AIDS has been an increase in general stories by 15% in the GMPS in South Africa. The trend in increasing general coverage is mirrored in the region from 19% to 37%.

The key to the graphs detailing what sub-topics are covered provides details on what is covered under “general” including people living with or affected by HIV and profiles of people in the HIV field or people affected by HIV. Linking the finding on the increase in general coverage with the substantial increase in the proportion of those directly and indirectly affected by HIV speaking out, a conclusion that can be drawn is that there is now far more coverage of the every day reality of HIV and AIDS. This is very important for de-stigmatising the pandemic.

The coverage of treatment in South Africa has increased from 25% to 28%, while in the region it has decreased from 16% to 12%.

In South Africa and the region, there has been a decline in stories on prevention (from 28% to 15% in South Africa and from 41% to 26% in the region) and corresponding increase in stories on the impact of the disease (from 4% to 9% in South Africa and 5% to 12% in the region). This is to be expected as the pandemic progresses, although the declining coverage on prevention is a cause for concern as this should remain a major thrust.

The coverage of care, support and rights in South Africa has decreased by 8%. This is a cause for concern as the burden care of those living with and affected by HIV and AIDS is increasing and is being carried by out women and girls.

HIV and AIDS sub topics

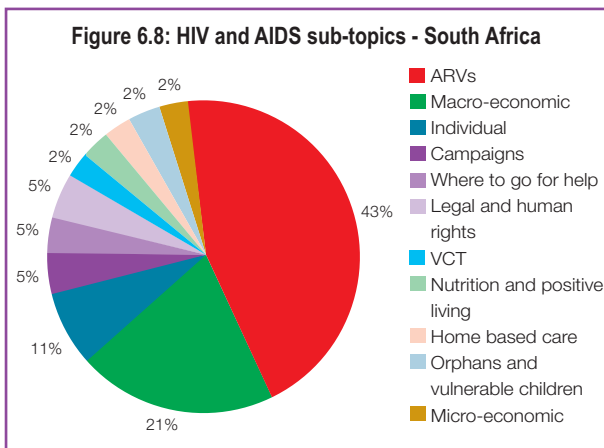


Figure 6.8 gives a breakdown on HIV and AIDS sub-topics. Consistent with the findings treatment, the provision of anti-retrovirals (ARVs) are the most reported on in South African media. This may be attributed to the highly politicised environment around ARVs in South Africa. This is followed by macro-economic issues at 21%, which is consistent with the findings of an increased coverage of the impact of the pandemic. Individual stories constituted 11% of coverage. Home-based care is among the least covered areas at 2%.

Genre

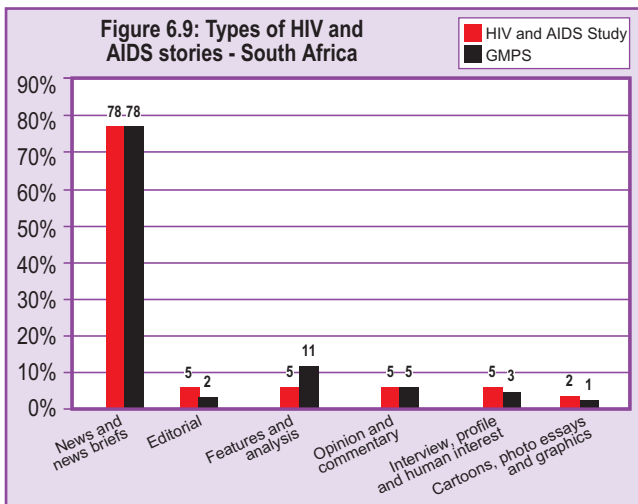
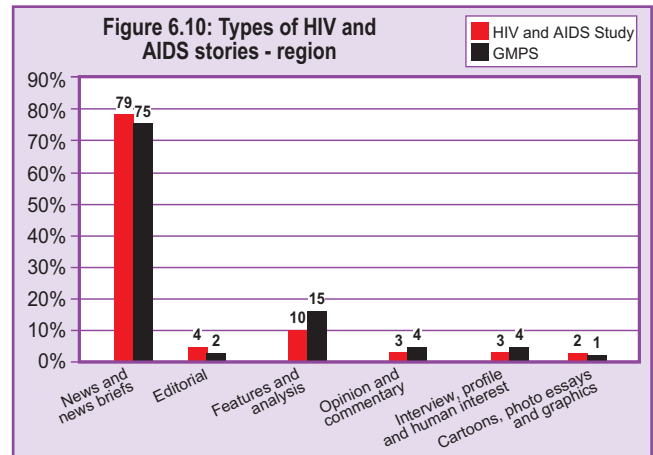


Figure 6.9 reflects changes in genres of HIV coverage in South Africa and figure 6.10 is a similar breakdown for the region. This shows that in coverage in news, opinion and commentary and editorials in South Africa has decreased, though coverage in features and analysis, interviews, profiles, human-interest stories, cartoons, photo essays and graphics has increased.

The increase in features and analysis is mirrored in the region and reflects in-depth coverage of HIV and AIDS. The decrease in editorials on HIV and AIDS is cause for concern because the priorities of editors often shape the what news is selected and what is left out.



Origin

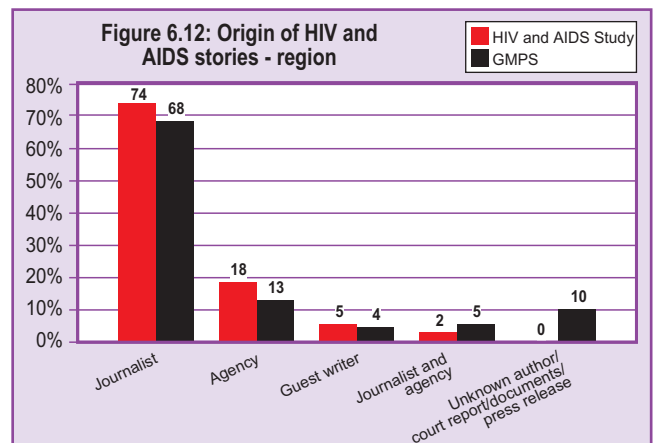
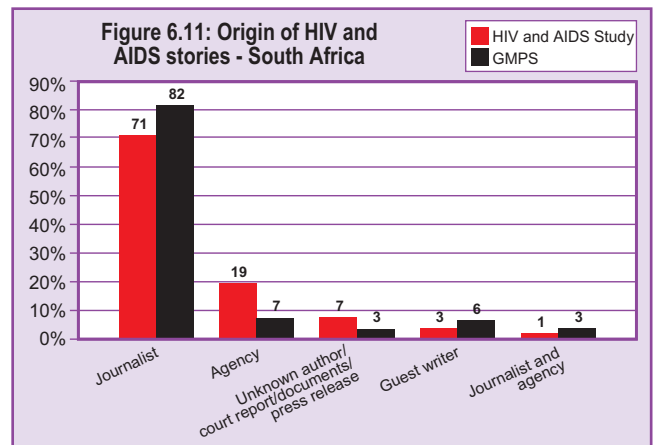


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Geographical scope

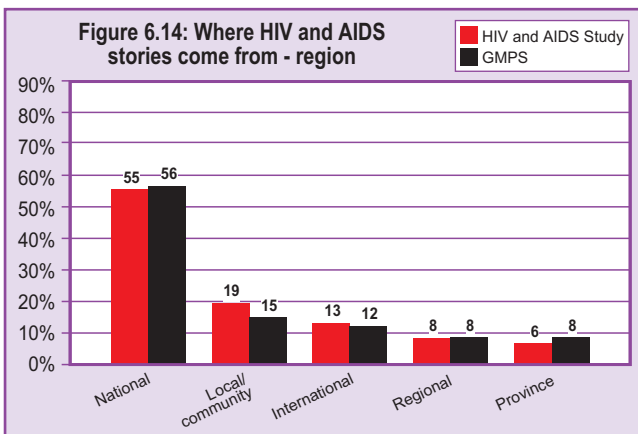
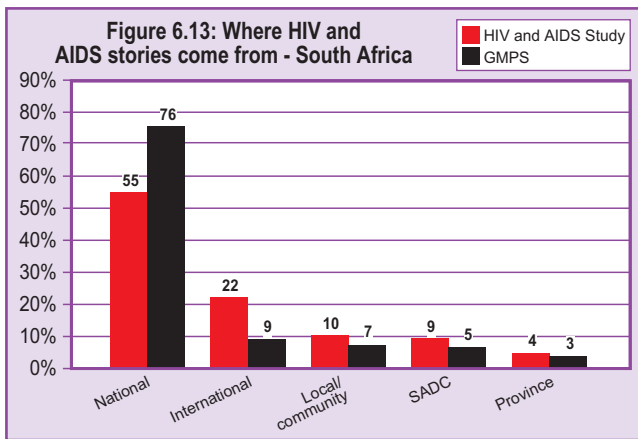


Figure 6.13 is a comparative look at the geographical origin of stories in South Africa while figure 6.14 provides these figures for the region. The graphs show that in South Africa and in the region there has been an increase in national coverage. This finding at country level is quite stark as national stories have increased by 28%. International stories have dropped from 12% to 9%. The internal focus is a positive development.

The drop in HIV and AIDS coverage from local/community in South Africa (from 25% to 7%) and the region (19% to 15%) is cause for concern. Women in communities are most affected by HIV and AIDS. A decline in stories from the local level implies that these women's stories are not being told.

Function

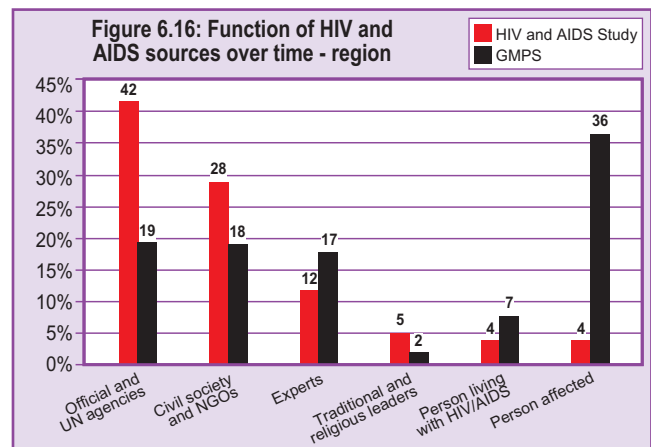
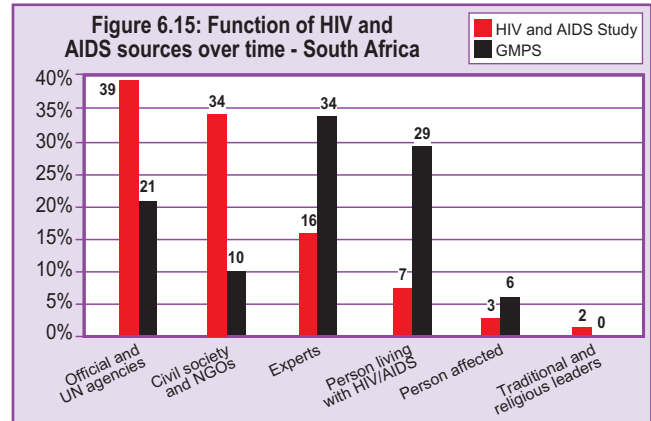


Figure 6.15 is a comparative look at the functions of sources in the HIV topic category for South Africa. Figure 6.16 provides similar data on the region. The graphs show that in South Africa and in the region, the proportion of those infected and affected by HIV who are now primary sources has increased substantially. In South Africa, the proportion of People Living with HIV and AIDS accessed by the media has increased drastically from 7% to 29% and in the region from 4% to 7%. In South Africa, the proportion of those affected by HIV and AIDS has increased from 3% to 6% and in the region from 4% to 36%. This is one extremely positive spin off from MAP that placed a heavy emphasis in policy, training and advocacy work on placing those most affected at the centre of coverage. In both South Africa and the region there has been a corresponding decline in the proportion of UN and official sources.

Who speaks on HIV and AIDS?

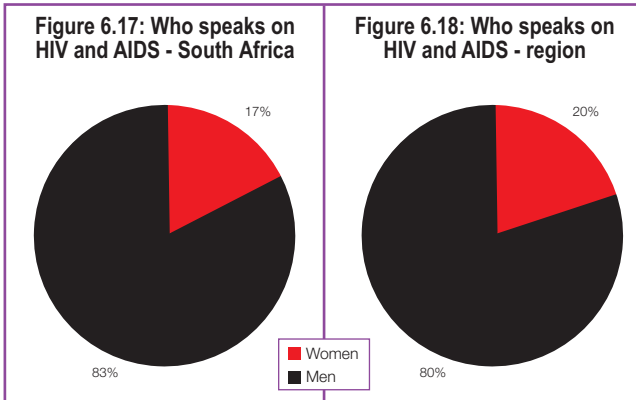


Figure 6.17 shows that, at 17%, women constitute less than a third of the sources on HIV and AIDS in the media in South Africa, despite being the most affected. This is lower than the region (see figure 6.18), where women make up 20% of HIV and AIDS sources.

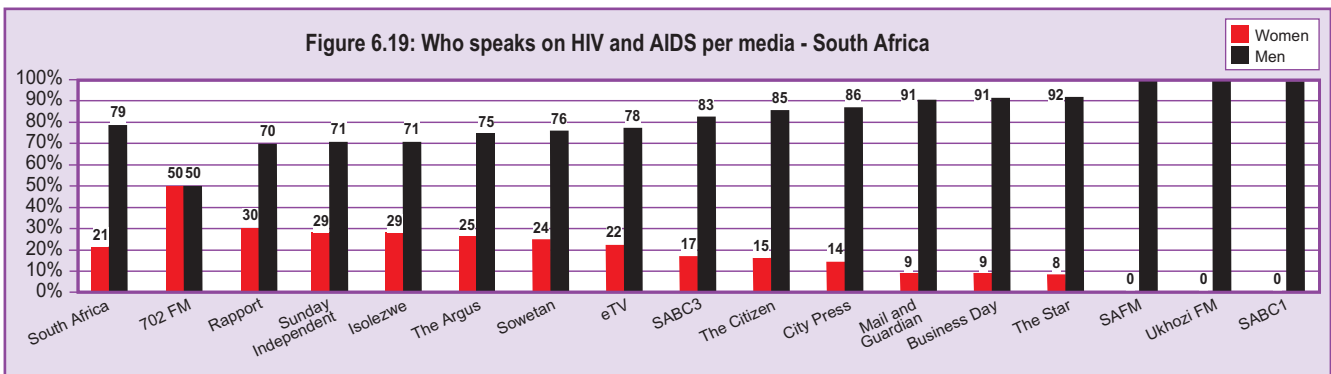


Figure 6.19 shows that 702 Talk Radio had equal proportions of women and men sources on HIV and AIDS. Rapport, Sunday Independent, Isolezwe, The Argus, Sowetan and eTV have between 20-30% women sources on HIV and AIDS. SAFM, Ukhozi FM and SABC1 had no women sources on HIV and AIDS. All three media are part of the public service broadcaster, SABC.

Sources over time

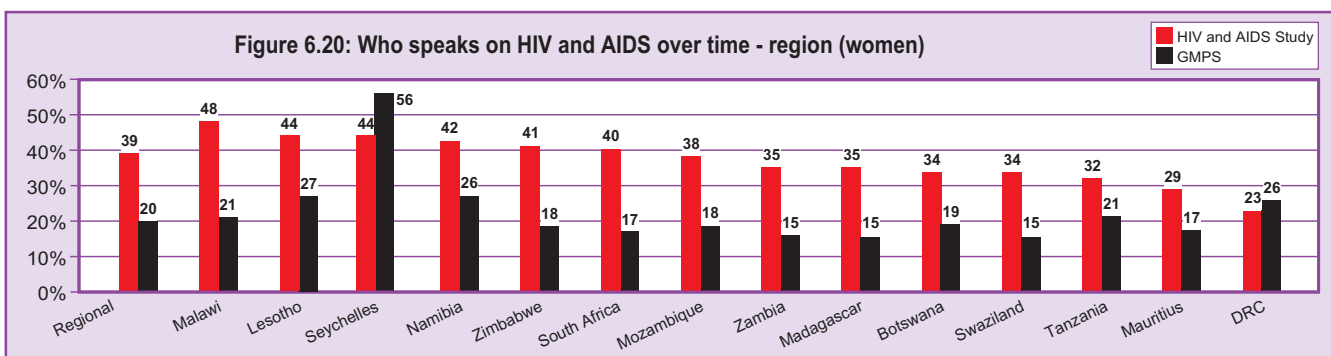


Figure 6.20 shows a decline in the proportion of women sources in the GMPS compared to the 2006 HIV and AIDS study. The regional average dropped from 39% to 20%, and South Africa from 40% to 21%. Seychelles and DRC are the only countries which recorded increases, with Seychelles going up from 43% to 56% and DRC from 23% to 26%.

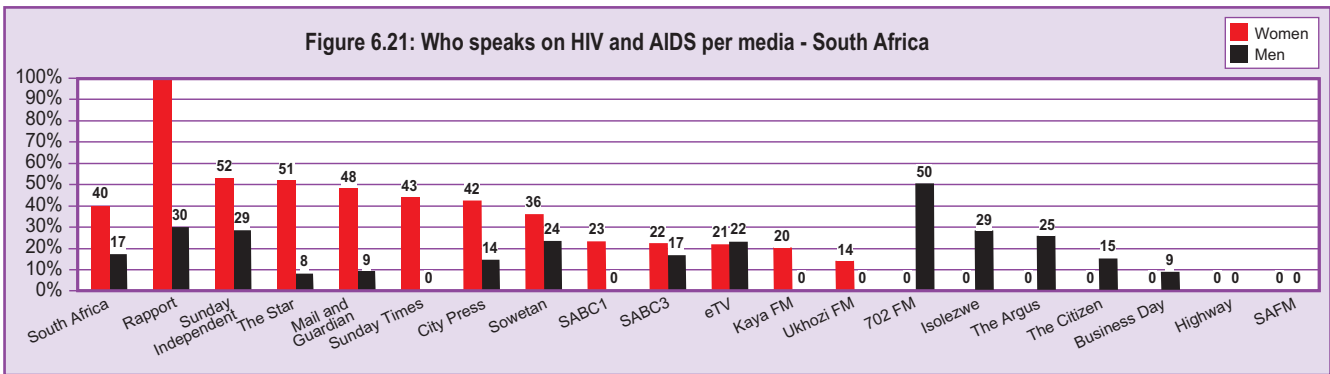
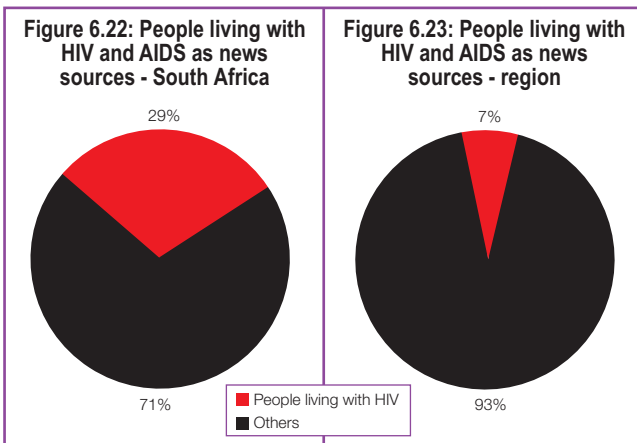


Figure 6.21 shows that eTV is the only media entity that has a marginally higher proportion of women sources in the GMPS (22%) compared to the 21% in the HIV and AIDS study. The other media houses that participated in the 2006 study went down. The

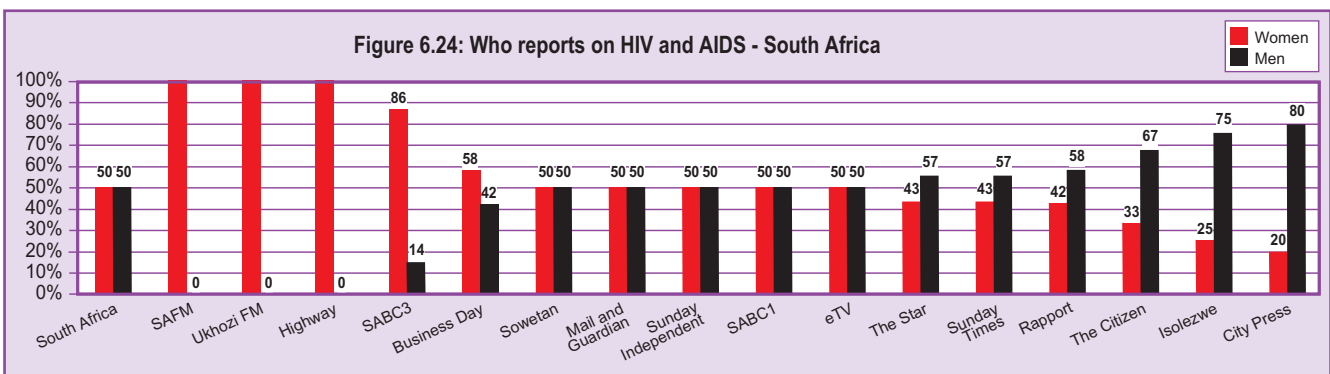
greatest drop was at *Rapport*, which fell from 100% to 30%. Significant decreases in women sources were recorded at the *Sunday Independent*, *The Star*, *Mail & Guardian*, *City Press* and *SABC 1*.

While it is appreciated that this disaggregation is based on very small samples, the results are worrying. They point to the need for media houses to develop gender and HIV and AIDS policies, the current thrust of GL's policy work in the region.

Figures 6.22 and figures 6.23 reflect the proportion of People Living with HIV and AIDS accessed by the media in South Africa and the region respectively (see also function of sources). This shows that the proportion of People Living with HIV accessed as sources in South Africa at 29% is much higher than the regional average of 7%.



Reporters



There are equal proportions of women and men reporting on HIV and AIDS in South Africa. At *SAFM*, *Ukhozi FM* and *Highway Radio* there are only women reporting on HIV and AIDS. Five media houses had equal numbers of women and men reporting on HIV and AIDS. These included *Sowetan*, *Mail & Guardian*, *Sunday Independent*, *SABC 1* and *eTV*.

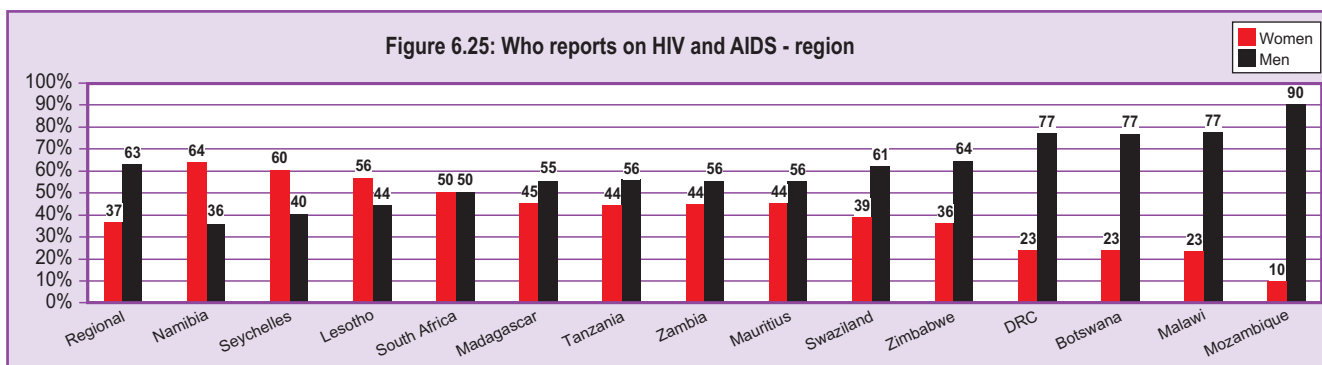


Figure 6.25 shows that the proportion of women reporters on HIV and AIDS is high in Namibia (64%), Seychelles (60%) and Lesotho (56%). Zimbabwe at 36% women reporters on HIV and AIDS is 1% lower than the regional average and ranks among the countries with the lowest proportions. South Africa is the only country in the study that recorded equal proportions of women and men reporters during the monitoring period.

This article appeared in the *City Press* on the 29 November 2009. The article entitled Poor ARV planning condemns patients to deaths is about ARV planning in the Free State.

The journalist gives the story a human face to demonstrate the impact of poor ARV planning.

The story is written ahead of World AIDS Day which is celebrated annually on 1 December worldwide. The event and issue is raised, but the story slants towards the issues. Considering that this is an in-depth piece, the investigative report provides a critical and focused eye on the subject of HIV and AIDS.

One primary source, female, is quoted and two secondary sources, male are indirectly quoted. As much as the grave scenario is poignantly told through multiple-voices, the unequal number of female and male sources makes the story unbalanced. HIV and lack of access to anti retroviral therapy affects both women and men. Thus a male voice would have added value to the perspective. Comments from official sources are scrutinised and juxtaposed by those who differ.

The article can be praised for capturing the voice of Stella Mothatha who by implication is a care giver infected and affected by HIV. By using Mothatha, the journalist gives the story a human face and demonstrates the depth of the research put into the story.

On the other hand, the story takes a holistic look at the health systems designed to deal with a pandemic which include the Free State health department and the Department of Health in the country. The probe incorporates information sourced from leaked documents and research done by such renowned institutions as Harvard University.

Statistics are not sex disaggregated for instance, "...33 000 people...". 'People' is used to refer to both men and women and this is not a good journalistic practice if one is to provide a balanced report.

The story is accompanied by Mothatha's photograph. The technique of looking at the big and small picture, in narrative journalism, is called "going up and down the ladder" worked well as readers can grasp the concrete reality of what it means to be denied treatment on time. However, in the captioning Mothatha is referred to as a "victim". Such language dehumanises women and equates them to minors.

The perspective that informs the story is rich and through investigative journalism, the reporter manages to give a detailed picture of the effects of poor ARV planning and highlights the plight of HIV patients through the story of Mothatha and Thapelo Mlonyeni. The expose on the health system in the Free State is covered in-depth. ARV supplies run dry in the province, placing many people living with HIV at risk. Complimentary and competing views are enlisted.

Conclusion

Participants at the consultative workshop attributed the low coverage of HIV and AIDS to “fatigue”. The discussion focused on how HIV and AIDS was being covered. From the research it is clear that the focus is still mainly on treatment and primarily supporting the official line. The main sources on HIV and AIDS are the voices of the UN or the government.

The participants pointed to the need to go into communities and report about the effect of HIV and AIDS at a local level.