



Sunday News reporter Delta Milayo Ndou (second from right) emphasises a point during the GMDC seminar on the topic, The media has failed women in Zimbabwe, at the Bulawayo Press Club on 17 August 2010. Following proceedings is Simiso Mlevu (right) a reporter with *uMthunywa* and Thenjiwe Dube, a secretary to the Editor of *Sunday News*.

Photo: Photo by Thabani Mpofu

MEDIA

PRACTICE

This chapter examines journalism practice in the Zimbabwean media. It covers questions such as which topics are covered by the media, the breakdown of coverage in genres, origin, geographic scope, primary and secondary sources, anonymity and single versus multiple sources.

Media practice is a new addition to the study. It seeks to contextualise missing voices within the broader context of media practice. For example, if the majority of stories are based on secondary sources, or if there is only one primary source, the chances of this being a male view or voice is high. The evidence gathered in this chapter reinforces the argument that gender-aware reporting is not only good for gender equality, but also good for media practice and vice-versa.

Topics

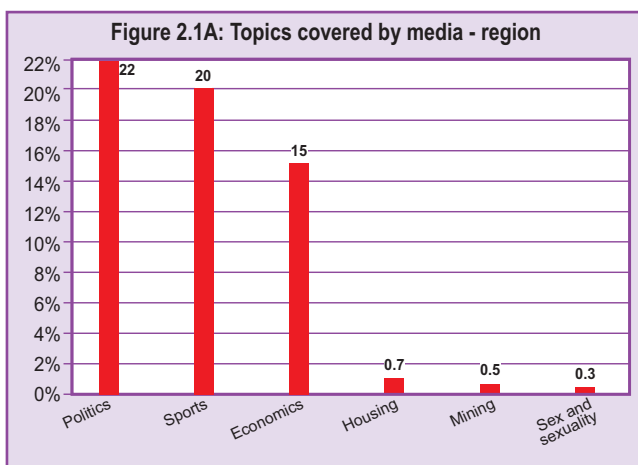
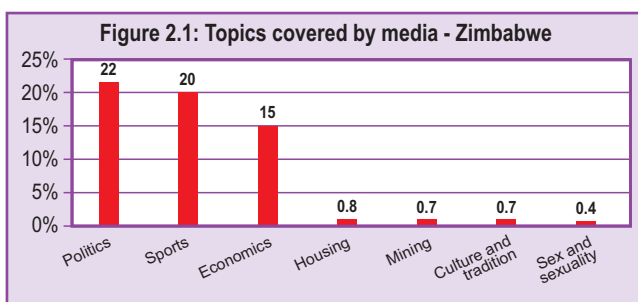


Figure 2.1 illustrates that political stories accounted for 22% of topics covered compared with 19% in the region, as shown in figure 2.1A. Sport (20%) and economics (15%) came second and third respectively (similar to the region). The lowest proportion of coverage in Zimbabwe was on sex and sexuality (0.4%) and mining and culture and tradition with each accounting for 0.7%. These findings were almost similar to the region.

The monitoring was done soon after the signing of the Global Political Agreement and during the nominations for the presidium. The 2010 Soccer World Cup in South Africa had an effect on the coverage of sport while the economic challenges which faced Zimbabwe during the monitoring period also led to a high proportion of economics stories. Due to these developments, even non-political stories were given a political thrust with no regard for gender balance.

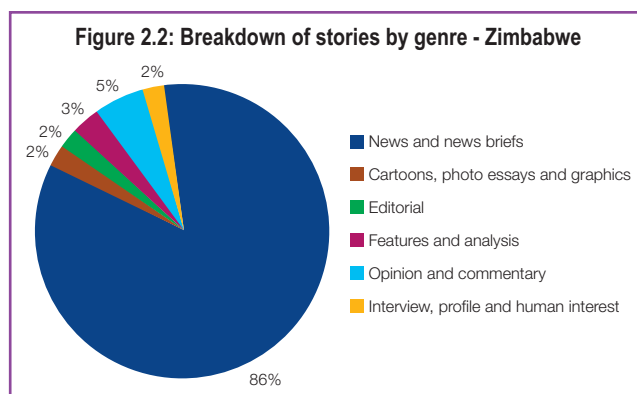
Gender-blind political stories dominate coverage

The article “Morgan Tsvangirai condemned for playing golf during the burial of a national hero” which was broadcast by Spot FM on 3 November 2009, is a good example of a gender-blind political story. Instead of focusing on the Prime Minister playing golf, the story takes a political perspective. It kicks off with social and religious commentators, who are all men, criticising the Prime Minister for choosing to play golf instead of attending the burial.

The story quotes men sources unhappy with the opposition leader's social diary. The use of religious and social sources, all men, also entrenches the image of men as models of power and authority. The choice of sources is unfair as known ZANU PF sympathisers like Tafatawona Mahoso are given an opportunity to castigate Tsvangirai. The sources are not neutral. No attempt was made to get sources from MDC or the spokesperson of the party, which at that time had disengaged from all government activities.

The story pitch, perspective and language used is biased and the report blatantly favours ZANU PF. Social and religious leaders also use strong terms like “ungrateful” when describing Tsvangirai's actions.

Genre



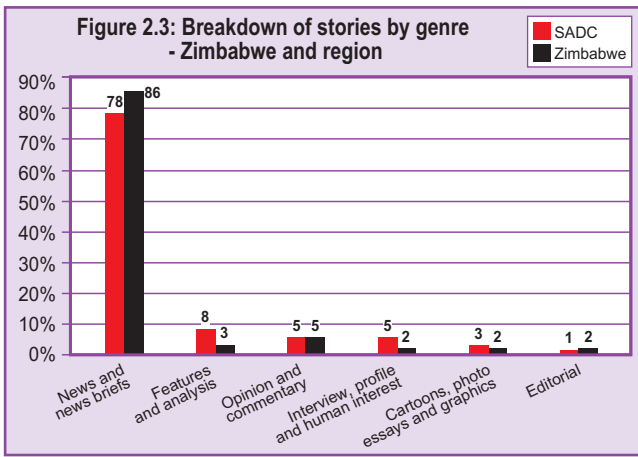


Figure 2.2 shows the breakdown of genres in Zimbabwe and figure 2.3 compares them to the region, illustrating a similar spread. In Zimbabwe news and news briefs make up most of the stories at 86% (78% in the region). The low proportions of features and analysis, opinion, commentary, interview, profiles and human-interest items in Zimbabwe and in the region indicate that coverage by the media in Zimbabwe lacks depth.

Origin

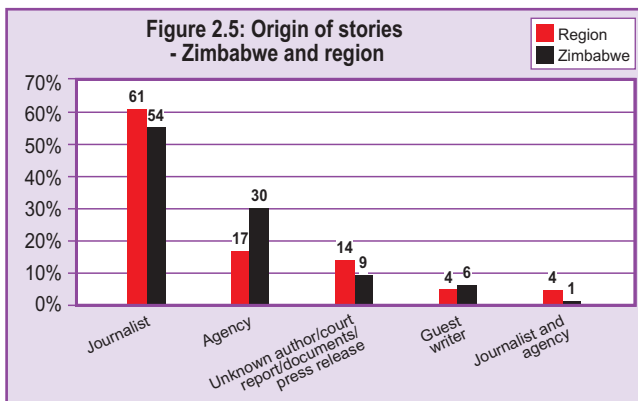
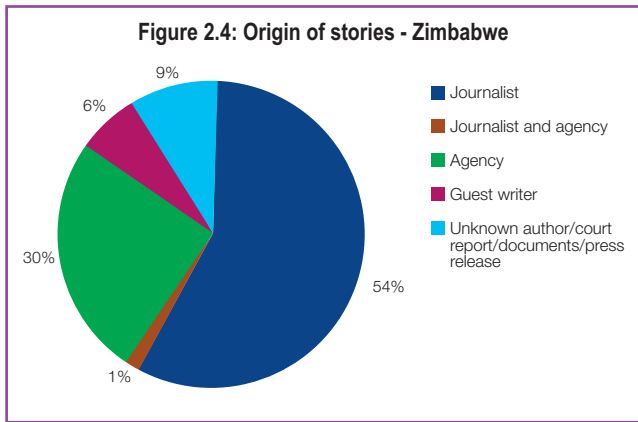


Figure 2.4 illustrates the origins of stories in the media in Zimbabwe, while figure 2.5 compares this with the region. In Zimbabwe and in the region most stories originate from journalists (54% and 61% respectively). That is a positive development which indicates that most stories in Zimbabwe and region are original and credible. However, the high reliance on news agencies in the country and region (30% and 17% respectively) is worrying.

Geographic scope

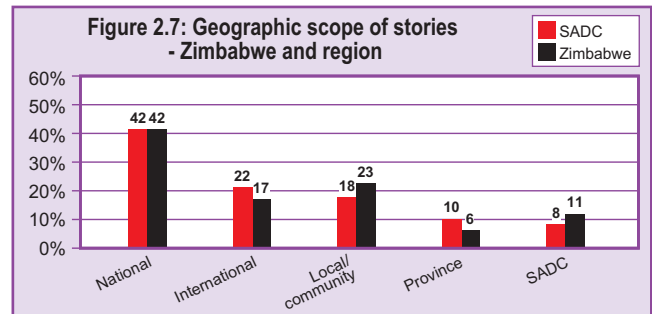
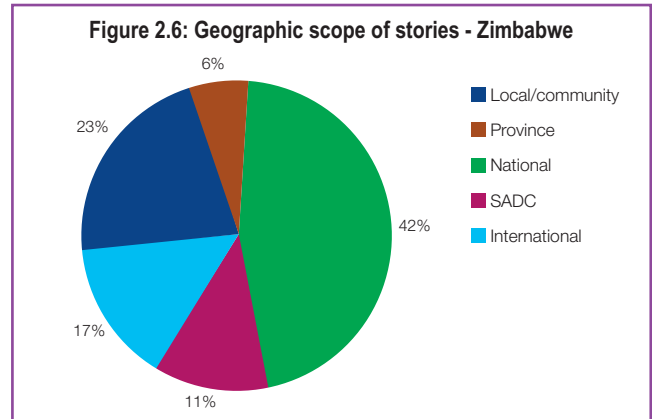
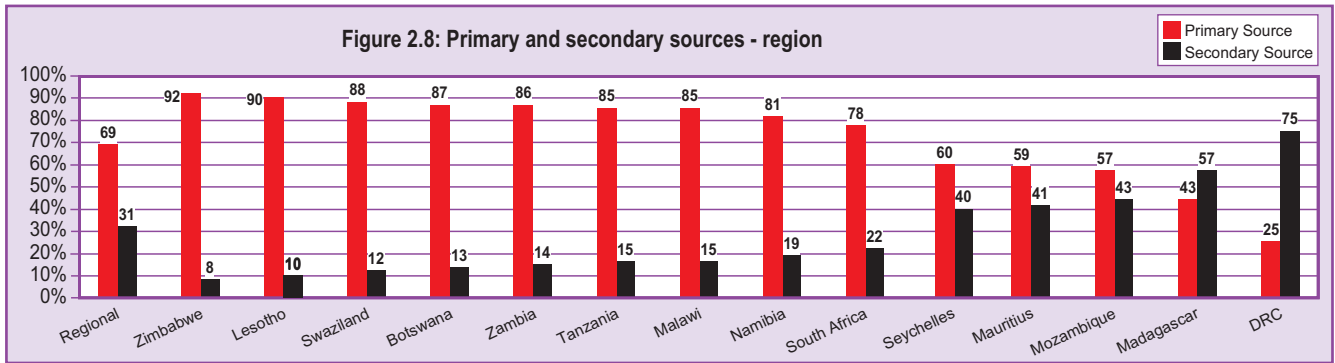


Figure 2.6 shows the geographic scope of stories in Zimbabwe, while figure 2.7 compares this with the region. National stories make up 42% of news stories followed by local/community, international, SADC and provincial items. A similar spread obtains in the region. The high figures for national and local/community stories in Zimbabwe could be explained by the fact that all the media sampled are mainstream, which has an influence in the way they source and angle stories. Again, it may be explained by the fact that most media houses sampled in the study were public media. There is a need for more stories from local/community. The local-content policy introduced by the government appears to be not bearing any fruit.

Type of sources



News sources can be divided into primary and secondary sources. A primary source is one in which a subject is interviewed directly, whereas a secondary source of information usually takes the form of a report, articles, or other pieces of written information, which are directly or indirectly quoted in stories.

Figure 2.8 shows that Zimbabwe fares better than most countries in the region with 92% primary sources. DRC is the worst performer with primary sources at 25%. The Zimbabwean figure for primary sources is higher than the regional average of 69%. That indicates an elevation in the standard of journalism, in that an over-reliance on secondary sources is regarded as a symptom of weak journalistic practice.

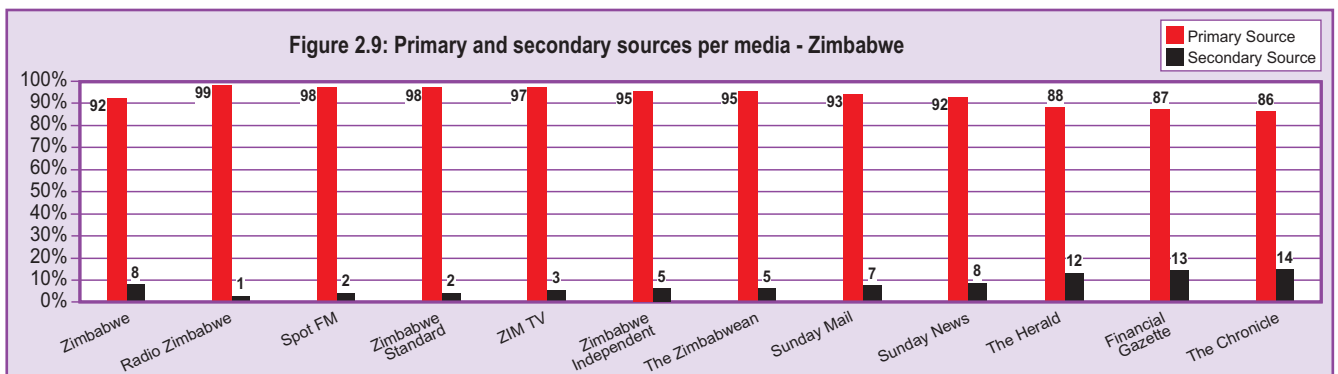
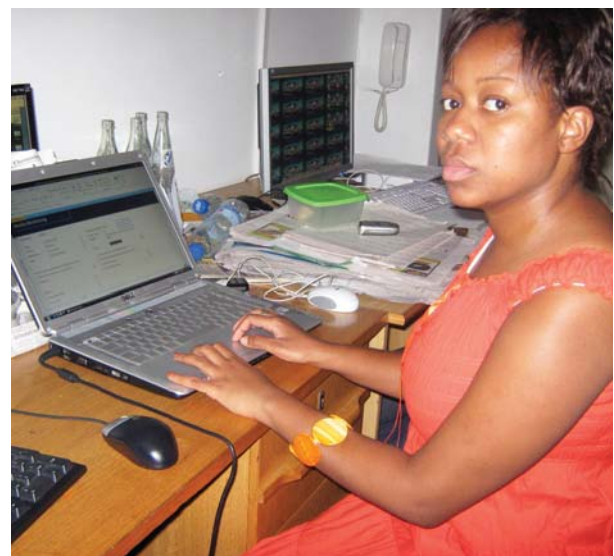
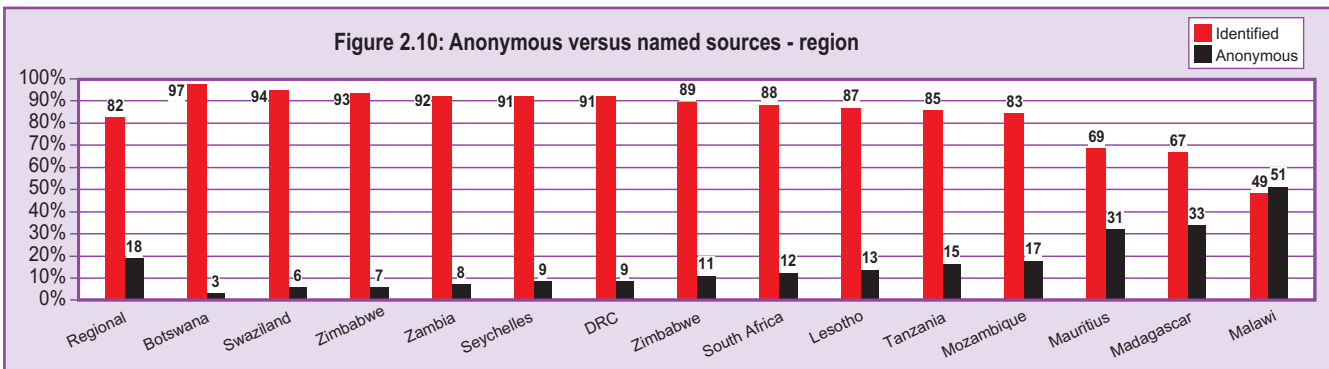


Figure 2.9 shows that there are significant differences between media houses with regard to primary and secondary sources. *Radio Zimbabwe* had the highest proportion of primary sources at 99%, followed by *Spot FM*, *Zimbabwe Standard*, *ZTV*, *Zimbabwe Independent* and *The Zimbabwean*. The lowest proportion of primary sources is in *The Chronicle* at 86%. This suggests that despite the unfriendly media environment, good journalism practice exists in Zimbabwe.



Sibusisiwe Dube one of the monitors from the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe.
Photo: Nhlanhla Ngwenya

Anonymity



Anonymity refers to use of sources which are not known or who are not willing to reveal their identities. Although it is sometimes necessary, particularly for sensitive or investigative stories and when sources fear victimisation, it is not considered sound journalistic practice and reflects a lack of professionalism. It also encourages laziness among journalists and diminishes the credibility of stories and the media. Figure 2.10 shows that most media in the region identify sources, with the exception of Malawi where a greater number of anonymous sources (51%) are cited than identified sources (49%). Zimbabwe, at 89%, which is higher than the regional average of 82%, is in seventh position after Botswana, Swaziland, Namibia, Zambia, Seychelles and DRC. The accepted view is that the fewer anonymous sources are used, the more credible the media.

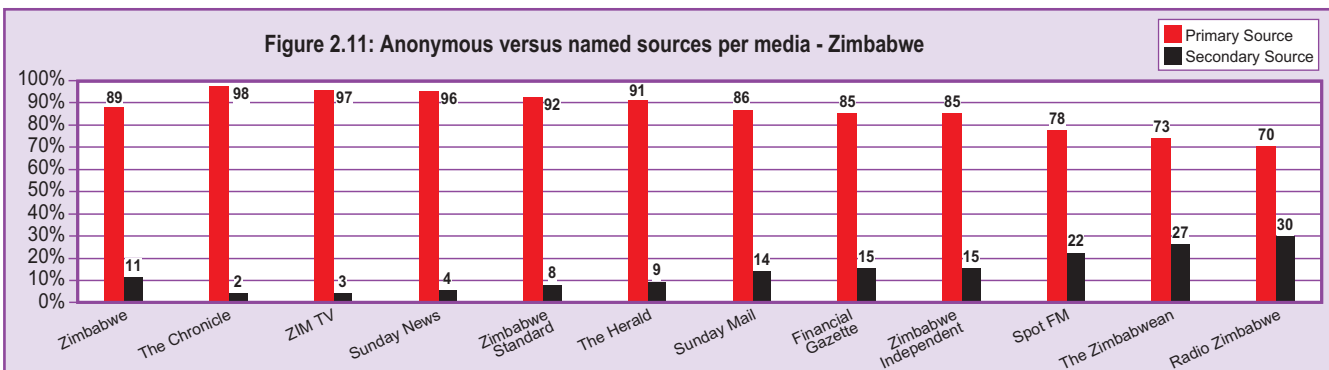


Figure 2.11 shows variations between media houses in terms of the proportion of anonymous versus identified sources in Zimbabwe. The government-owned media has the highest proportion of identified sources, ranging from *The Chronicle* at 98% to *Radio Zimbabwe* at 70%. The private media also does well, given the restrictive environment under which it operates. The *Zimbabwe Independent* has 85% identified sources, *Financial Gazette* (85%) and *The Zimbabwean* (73%). The high number of anonymous sources for *Radio Zimbabwe* are a cause of concern because the medium has a much broader reach than others and thus a higher listenership.

Single- versus multiple-source stories

Reliance on single sources is a reflection of lack of professionalism that has gender dimensions. In our male-dominated society, if only one source is consulted there is a strong likelihood that this will be a man. Single sources stories usually lack balance as they often do not allow for a diversity of opinions. Only one point of view is given. In principle, with the exception of brief news items, every story should have more than one source.



Christina Mundozi one of the ZBC radio monitors from Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe. Photo: Nhlanhla Ngwenya

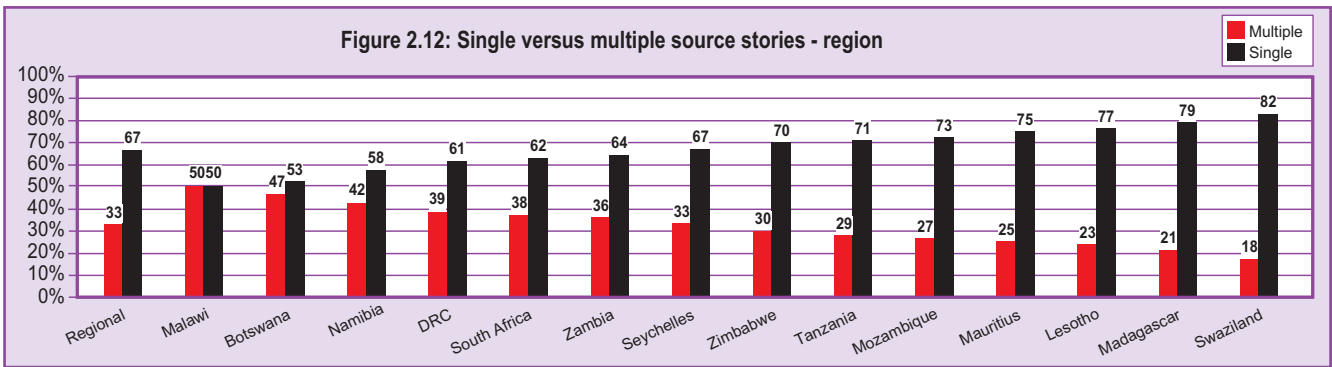
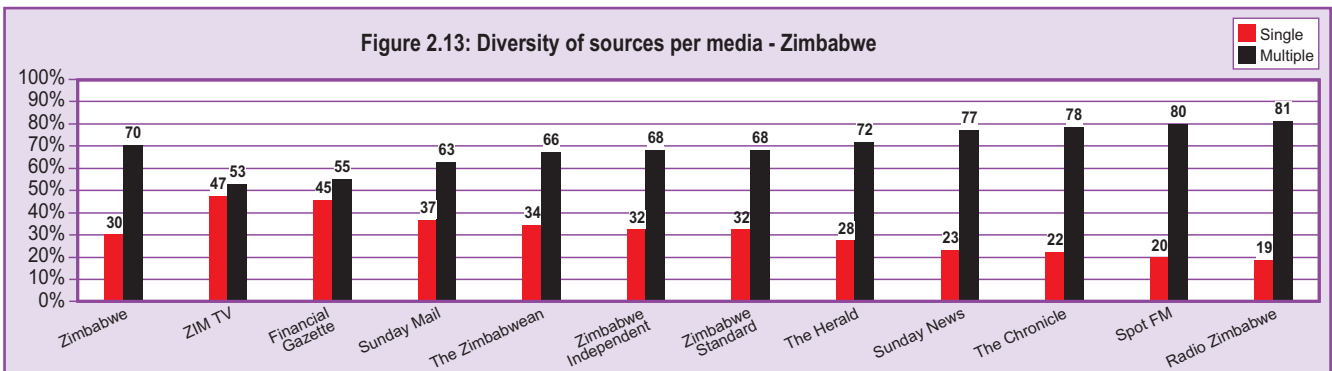


Figure 2.12 shows the proportion of single to multiple sources in the Zimbabwe media, compared with the regional average. It shows the media in Zimbabwe (30%) in eighth position in the use of multiple sources, after Malawi, Botswana, Namibia, DRC, South Africa, Zambia

and Seychelles. The country falls slightly below the regional average of 33%. Only six countries fall above the regional average, but none of them exceed 50%. The 70% margin of single sources in Zimbabwe indicates a lack of diversity of sources in news stories that may give rise for concern.



Jealous Mawarire an independent media researcher at the Zimbabwe GMPS consultative workshop.
Photo: Gender Links

Figure 2.13 shows that *Radio Zimbabwe* has the highest proportion of single-source stories at 81%, followed by *Spot FM* at 80%. Participants during the consultative workshop noted a lack of resources in the public media as the cause for high proportion of single sources. However, *ZTV* has the highest proportion of multi-sources at 47%. With a country average of 70% single sources, the findings point to the lack of diversity of sources in the media in Zimbabwe. In a media environment where the likelihood of most stories being gender blind are high, men would dominate as sources of news.



Henry Masuku, National Director, Zimbabwe Association of Community Radio Stations.

Photo: Gender Links

Function

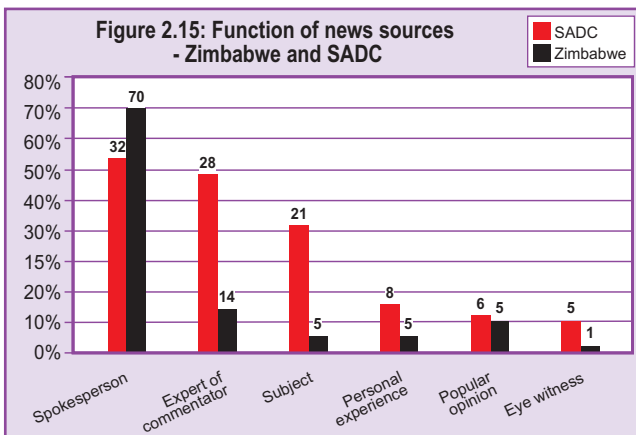


Figure 2.14 shows that Zimbabwe media relies more on spokespersons (70%) than the regional media at 32%. This could be explained by the fact that the research period was characterised by more political stories soon after the formation of a unity government. There were a lot of announcements from political parties spokespersons and government spokesperson. Since the spokespersons are usually powerful and influential men, most stories are unlikely to be gender aware. The media also relies on experts or commentators (14%), again a category in which

men are likely to predominate. Therefore, chances are high that the bulk of news sources in Zimbabwe are men.

Conclusions

During the consultative workshop on the draft Zimbabwe GMPS in August 2010 and visits to newsrooms, editors and journalist raised a number of issues which help to explain the slow progress in women as news sources.

Participants noted that the political instability in Zimbabwe which prevailed during the monitoring period led to the high proportion of political stories and few voices of women. The period leading to formation of the unity government was characterised by political violence which may have prevented women from speaking in the media. The economic recession also had an impact in the coverage of issues as the media focused more on economic developments. The 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup in neighbouring South Africa saw the media covering sport more than other topics.

However, Dr Lawton Hikwa, the dean of the Faculty of Communication and Information at the National University of Science and Technology and keynote

speaker at the consultative workshop, noted that laziness among journalists in Zimbabwe was a more likely reason for poor coverage rather than a media-unfriendly environment. He said media houses in Zimbabwe had to take up gender policies to help influence coverage.

Paul Mambo, the editor of *Sunday News*, said a “newspaper takes the character of its editor” and that he strongly believed gender issues were misunderstood. “They are not about women, but [about] people regardless of [their] sex”. He said that unless gender issues were given the right focus, he saw no need for his paper to focus on gender issues. Mambo, who is also the chairperson of the Zimbabwe Editor's Forum, said also that gender issues were not the best seller of newspapers, because they were viewed as women's issues.

Vincent Kahiya, the Editor-in-Chief of the *Zimbabwe Independent, Standard* and the newly established private daily newspaper, *News Day*, said that although the group did not have a gender policy, individual newspapers were doing their best to prioritise gender issues. He noted that

women were not always willing comment on political issues, which should explain the absence of their voices.

A freelance reporter and academic, Jealous Mawarire, called for the need for a change in approach to gender issues. Responding to the question why editors were not prioritising gender issues, Mawarire challenged gender activists to desist from using a radical approach, since that only served to harden the attitudes of “people we are targeting” to convince. He also said journalism practice in Zimbabwe had to change from event-based reporting to in-depth coverage.

Participants also said the country had lost a number of experienced journalists owing to the harsh economic and unstable political environment. They noted a lack of competition due to the closure of media organisations which affected efforts to raise the the standards of journalism in the country. Nevertheless, the establishment of the Zimbabwe Media Commission resulted in five more newspapers being granted licences.