



Drama on gender based violence.

Photo: Trevor Davies

● **COVERAGE OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE**

The prevalence of gender based violence 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 to ensure that people who experience violence receive effective care and support.

The media is more often than not part of the problem rather than of the solution when it comes to coverage of gender violence: 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.

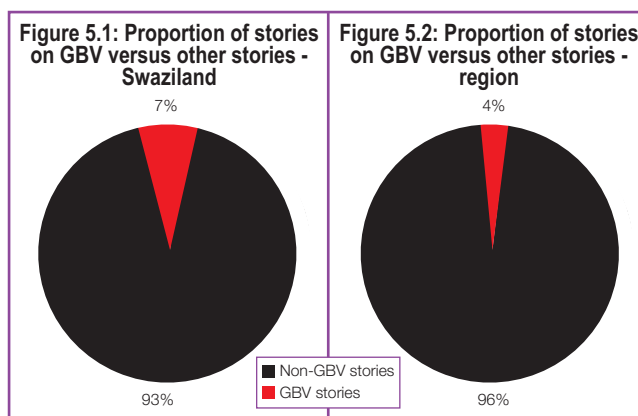


Coverage of gender violence has been monitored in the regional and global studies. GL has also worked with GEMSA chapters in conducting periodic monitoring of the Sixteen Days of Activism campaign. Key findings emerging from these studies are that:

- 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.

Topic



Sub topics

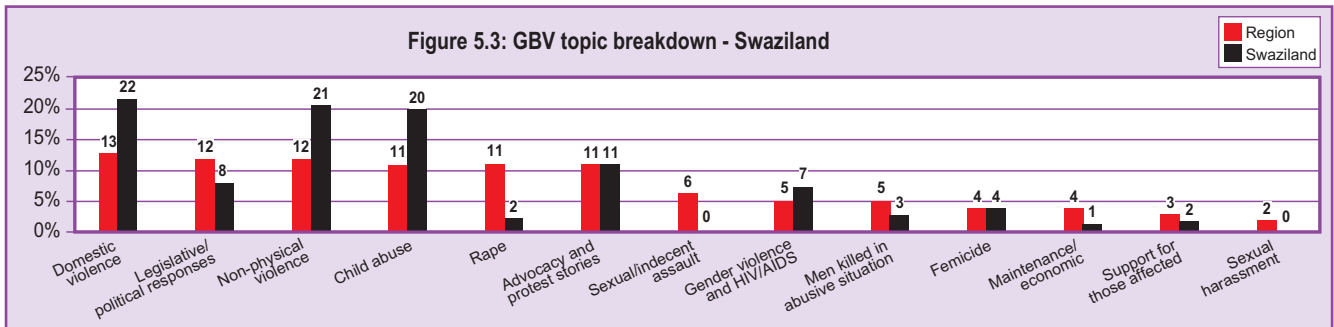


Figure 5.3 shows that domestic violence (22%) receives most coverage in Swaziland media followed by non-physical violence (21%) and child abuse (20%). These figures are higher than the regional averages where domestic violence accounts for 13% non physical violence (12%) and child abuse is 11%. These findings are in line with research on gender based violence which revealed that most gender based violence takes place in the confines of the home.

In Swaziland rape is least reported on compared with other topics. In the region topics that receive less coverage are sexual harassment 2%, support for those affected 3% maintenance/economic 4%.

Figure 5.4 shows variance in coverage across media. Out of the five surveyed media, four reported on GBV. *Swaziland Radio* had no GBV stories during the entire monitoring period. *Channel Swazi* (14%) has the most GBV stories followed by *Times of Swaziland*

(10%). *Swaziland* (7%) and *Swazi TV* (6%) are the only media houses sampled in the study which are above the country average of 7% in reporting on GBV. The rest of the media houses are however under the country average.

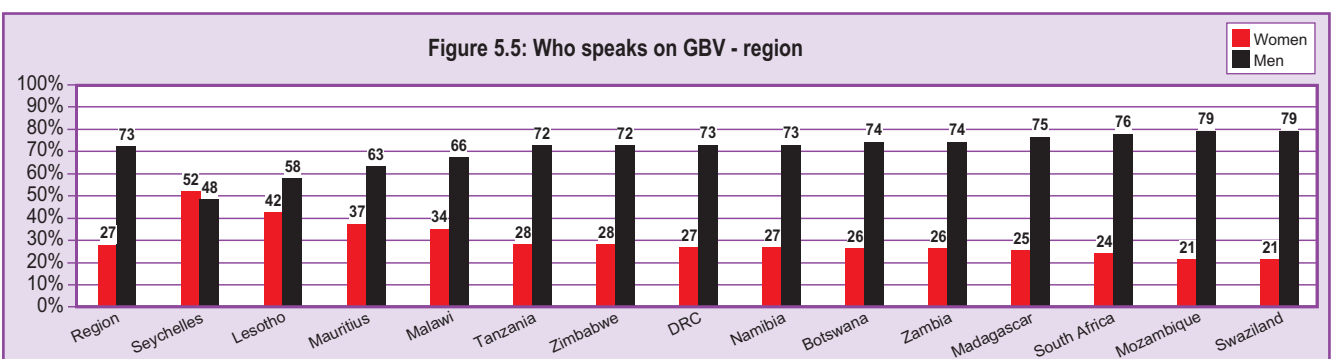
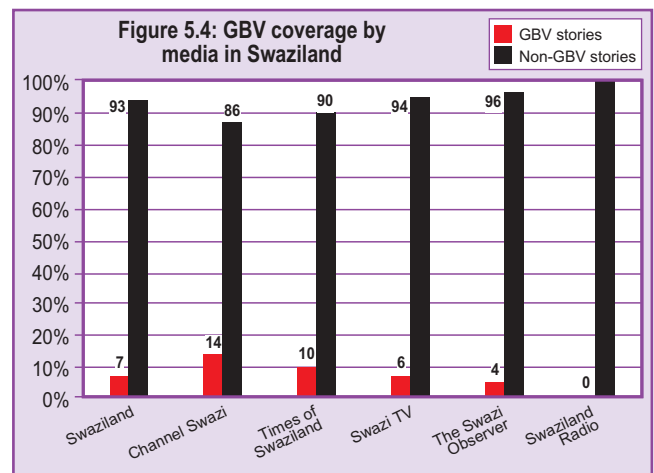


Figure 5.5 shows that 27% women and 73% men speak on GBV in the region. Swaziland ranks last in the region with 21% women and 79% men speaking on GBV. This figure is also slightly lower than the regional average of 27%. Only Seychelles is closer to the 50/50 parity with 52% women and 48% men. Lesotho is close at 42% women and 58% men. These figures are worrying given that women who are vulnerable and in most cases victims of domestic violence speak less than men who are often perpetrators in these cases.

Who speaks on what?

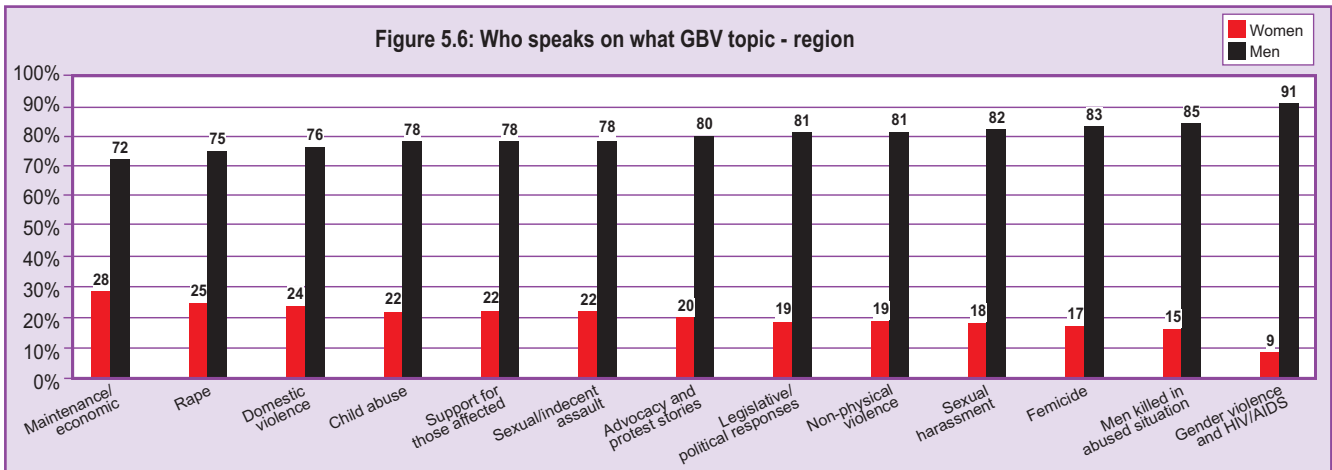


Figure 5.6 shows that men sources dominate across all sub-topics in the region. Women are better represented as sources on maintenance and economic stories (28%) followed by rape (25%). Women speak less on gender violence and HIV and AIDS. This is despite them constituting a high proportion as victims/survivors.

Function of GBV sources

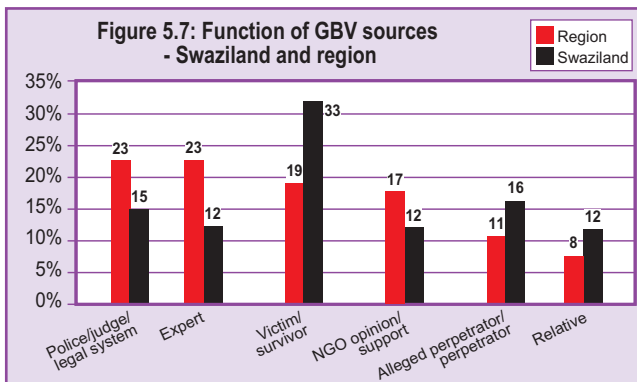


Figure 5.7 shows that victim/survivor constitutes the highest proportions of sources in media in Swaziland with 33%. This is followed by alleged perpetrator at 16%. Police/judge/legal system comes in third with 15% of sources. The picture is different in the region with official sources such as

police/judge/legal system being accessed the most. This often denies victims/survivor the opportunity to speak about their experiences. Experts constitute a higher proportion of sources in the region than Swaziland which is a positive development.

Who reports on GBV?

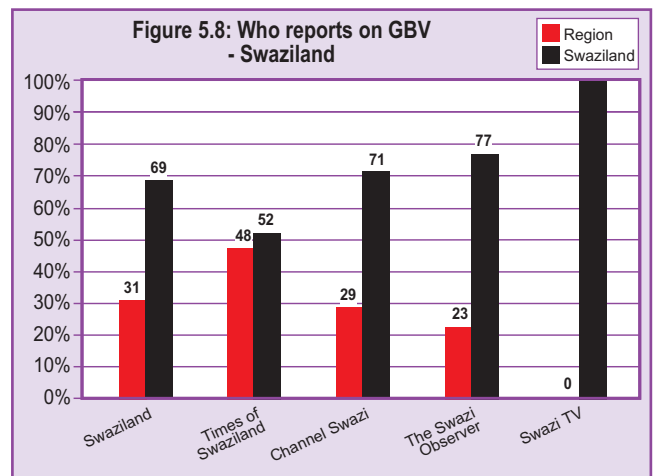


Figure 5.8 shows that men reporters cover gender based violence more than their female counterparts. The proportion of female reporters is just over a third at 31%. There are however differences across individual media with no female reporters covering this topic on *Swazi TV*. *Times of Swaziland* has the highest proportion of women sources at 48%. The dominance of men reporters shows that men are beginning to appreciate beats that have always been associated with women.



Gender and media activists at a workshop.

Photo: Colleen Lowe Morna

Survivors/victims to speak out

The qualitative monitoring yielded examples of survivors of GBV speaking out. For example the article "Girl (17) in forced kutekwa" published by Weekend Observer. This story is about the forced marriage of a 17-year-old girl Phephisile Dlamini. The teenager was married allegedly against her consent. This happened when she went to visit her 28-year-old boyfriend who detained her at his home telling her that she was now his wife. The girl managed to run away back to her parents' home. To her shock, her father wanted nothing to do with her and he called the "husband's" family to come and fetch her against her will. She was forcibly bundled into a car to the husband home where she was locked up for five days until she managed to run away. Swazi law clearly stipulates 18 years to be the legal age for marriage. First the girl is given ample space to tell her story, then her father and the 'husband'. What is evident is that the two men agree on certain facts which are in total contradiction with what the girl is saying. The writer does not question them further so as to gain more insight into what happened.

Girl (17) in forced *kutekwa*

Stories by Sitho Magangula

A 17-year-old girl is caught in a forced marriage saga at Mqandeni, Madagagascar in the Ekhobho region. Phephisile Dlamini says she has been held against her consent by a 28-year-old man of Ndzingeni. The man is Mlangisi Mncina. Now the two families are at loggerheads following the supposedly forced marriage between the two. The girl was released two weeks ago by the Mncina's whilst she had paid a visit to Mlangisi, her lover of two weeks.

So serious is the situation such that the two families were on Monday summoned to the Mthata Police Station to answer questions on the said 'marriage'.

Narrating events leading to her forced marriage, Phephisile informed the *Weekend Observer* that she was called by her lover two weeks ago who requested her to come visit him at his parental home at Ndzingeni.

"When he made the call, he told me that he wanted to buy me a gift since my birthday fell on that weekend. When I arrived at his home on Saturday, he spoilt me with gifts and said I must remain in the house as he went to a funeral at a nearby hometown. I told him I had to go home but he refused and locked me inside the house. At night, a bunch of women came to the house and told me I had just been released. I told them I was against it but they proceeded with all the rituals and

...held hostage for five days after 'marriage' whilst dad says it's OK.



Seventeen-year-old Phephisile Dlamini during an interview. (Pic: Sitho Magangula)

ignored my protests," she said. The girl explained that the following Monday, she ran away and went to her parental home at Mqandeni and informed her parents of what had happened.

She said her father, Ndzingeni Dlamini, was furious and told her to return to the Mncina home.

"He called the Mncinas to come and collect me. I was stunned that my father could betray me like that. I clearly explained to him that I had not consented to the marriage but he said I was a wife and I should go to my so-called marital home," she

said.

The young woman explained how her brother, acting on an order from her father, bundled her into a vehicle belonging to the Mncina's on Monday, November 2, 2009.

This was after her father had called the Mncinas to 'come and collect their wife'.

During the scuffle, one of her brothers punched her with a fist on the left eye whilst forcing her to get into the car.

During the interview on Tuesday, her left eye was still swollen.

After successfully putting her in the car, the Mncina's drove off to their home at Ndzingeni where she was locked into the 'groom's' house.

She said she remained locked inside the house until she was able to escape on Friday, November 6. This means she remained locked for five solid days!

"I had a chance and got out of the house at around 7pm. I ran into the road where I hitch-hiked until a certain vehicle stopped for me. I requested the driver to take me to Mthata Police Station," she stated.

She reported the matter to the police who took statements and later drove her home, Mqandeni.

The police summoned both families to the Mthata Police Station on Monday where the issue was deliberated at length.

She must just go - Dad

Ndzingeni Dlamini, father to Phephisile (17) says she does not want anything to do with her daughter.

"I even told the police on Monday that I want this child gone from this home before I do something. I might regret for the rest of my life," said a furious Ndzingeni during an interview at his home at Mqandeni on Tuesday.

Dlamini says his daughter is 'very naughty' and has been causing problems for him since she reached puberty.

"Lalengandlabele sibe. She has caused so much pain and stress for my family. I don't know what is wrong with her. I was happy when I heard that she had been released and now she turns around to say ngqomandini. I wasn't there when she fell in love with this man who subsequently released her. I'm very angry right now because she lied to the police and said I'm the one who's forcing her into the marriage. She must just go and leave all of us in peace," said Dlamini, seething with rage.

He denied that her daughter was assaulted by his sons during a scuffle where Phephisile was forcefully bundled into a vehicle.

"It's true that I called the Mncina's to come and fetch her but there was no scuffle. No one assaulted her. She boarded the car on her own volition," he said.

She's my wife - 'hubby'

Mlangisi Mncina, 27, the man who has allegedly released a 17-year-old girl after her consent, says the girl is his 'wife'.

Mncina, in an interview with *Weekend Observer* reports this week, denied that he consented Phephisile against her consent.

"She's my lawfully wedded wife now and we discussed this before I released her. She agreed and I made the necessary preparations. It's not true that I took her by surprise," he said.

Mncina further denied 'kidnapping' Phephisile for five days.

"I never kidnapped her. How can I kidnap my own wife? *Indinga Indu* I don't know what happened with her after the marriage. She has been acting strange and has been running around. She was fine before we married and even consented to it but after the marriage, she just changed completely," said Mncina.

He also confirmed that his 'father-in-law' Ndzingeni called him to collect his 'wife'.

"Dlamini called me and said I should come and fetch my 'thing'. *Wani angile ngqomandini lesiphi jama*. Apparently, she's troublesome at her parental home, which confirms my assertion that she has changed since we married."

During the interview, it was evident that Mncina is not aware that the marriage age in Swaziland is 18 years.

It's a violation of her rights - SWAGAA

The Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse (SWAGAA) has cried foul over the forced marriage of a 17-



Ndzingeni Dlamini, Phephisile's father.

year-old girl and her subsequent 'kidnapping'.

Director of SWAGAA Cebile Manzini-Henwood says Phephisile Dlamini's rights have been grossly violated.

"Her rights have been infringed by this man who purportedly married her against her consent. The law is clear that parties intending to marry should both consent to it. In any event, in this case, issues of consent don't even apply because the girl is under-age. The age of majority in Swaziland is 18 years and she did not even need to consent to this so-called marriage," she explained.

Manzini-Henwood stated that Phephisile had been abused and humiliated by the whole episode owing to the allegation that she was locked inside a room for five days.

"Her rights to free will and freedom of movement have been grossly violated. She has been thoroughly abused and made to do things she doesn't want."

The director says time has come for society to understand that this kind of treatment against women and minors is unacceptable.

"These things will continue to happen if we don't take them seriously. We really need the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act to curb such things. I hope parliamentarians will support the enactment of the Bill," she disclosed.

THE CONSTITUTION SAYS: Chapter III, under section 279 deals with the rights and protection of the family.

Section 279 (1) Men and women of marriageable age have a right to marry and found a family.

(2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

Section 28 addresses the rights and freedoms of women. Section 28(3) says: "A woman shall not be compelled to undergo or uphold any custom to which she is not conscientiously opposed."

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Figure 5.9: Who reports on GBV - region

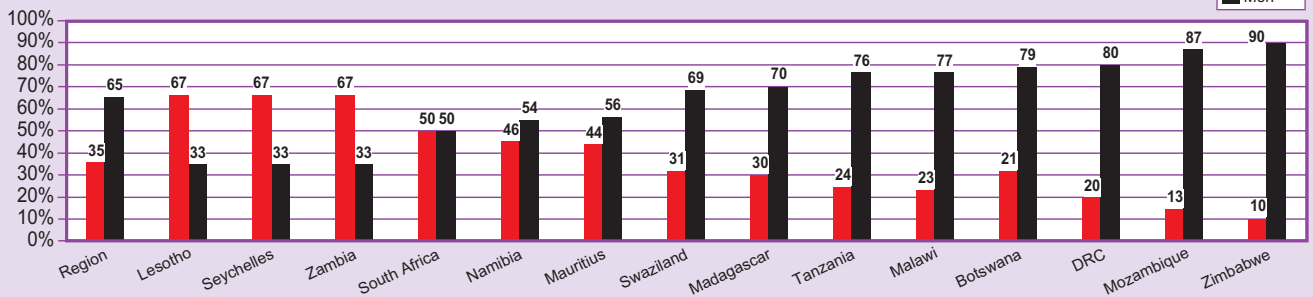


Figure 5.9 shows that men make up 65% of all reporters on GBV in the region. In Swaziland the proportion of women reporters (31%) is lower than the regional average of 35%. Men dominate in the regional coverage of GBV although there are differences across countries. For example Lesotho and Seychelles have the highest proportions of women reporters at 67%. In Zimbabwe there are huge gaps with men constituting 90% of reporters and women 10%.

These figures are consistent with the low proportion of women reporters overall in these countries.

Conclusions

Participants agreed that gender based violence is indeed a problem in Swaziland. They said most of it is rooted in patriarchy and traditional beliefs. GBV has been normalised such that even media

does not condemn it. Most participants said that media practitioners are products of the society that they come from. As such societal beliefs rear their ugly heads in the way that media handle issues of gender based violence. GBV is taken as routine disciplinary measures where a woman has erred or deviated from societal expectations.

There were however some participants who highlighted that Swazi culture has traditionally been friendly to women. It is only when culture is misused that women tend to suffer. Aleck Lushaba,

Editor of *Weekend Observer* pointed out that culture evolves and such it is good for society and media to move with this shift in paradigm.

Notably while women are the majority of GBV 'victims/survivors' their views are not captured by media. This is in line with the gender blind reporting where stories are told from a male perspective.

Participants also highlighted that there are fewer women reporting on GBV because there are fewer women in the media generally.