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Photo: Sikhonzile Ndlovu

MEDIA

PRACTICE

This chapter examines journalism practice in the Zambia media. The chapter covers questions such as which topics are covered by the media, the breakdown of coverage with regard to 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 most stories are based on secondary sources, or if there is only one primary source in a story, the chances of this being a male view or voice is high. The evidence gathered in this chapter underscores the argument that gender-aware reporting is not only good for gender equality, but also good for media practice.

Topic

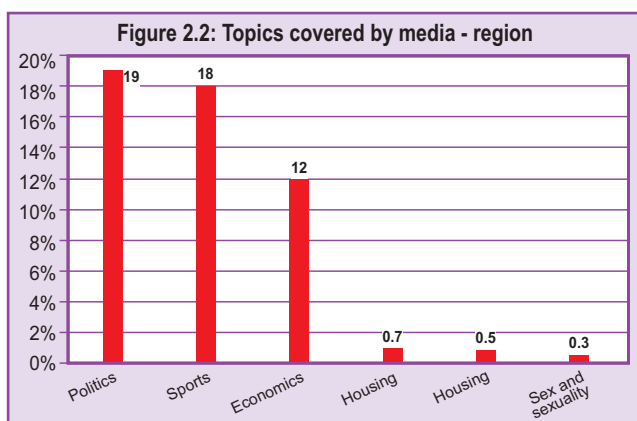
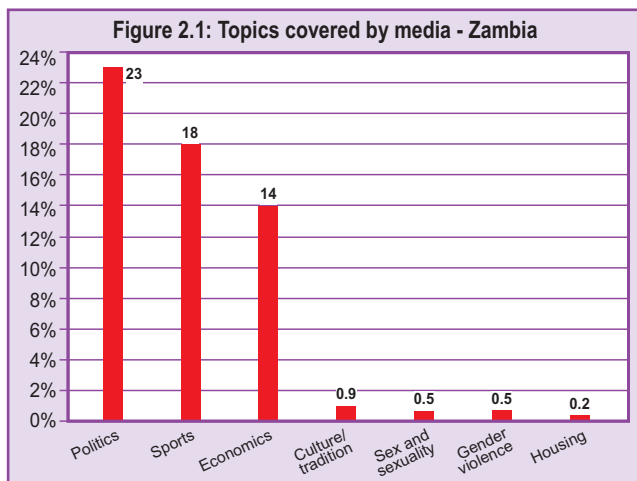


Figure 2.1 shows topics covered by the media in Zambia, while figure 2.2 does the same for the region. In Zambia, political stories received the highest proportion of coverage accounting for 23% of all stories covered during the monitoring period.

The pattern was the same in the region where politics received the highest coverage at 19%. In Zambia, sport (18%) and economics (14%) came second and third respectively (similar to the region). The lowest coverage was on housing, sex and sexuality, gender equality, and culture and tradition. This means that gender-related topics are not considered newsworthy in Zambia. However, there were examples of political stories where women have been empowered and are claiming their space.

For example, the story “Intraparty wrangles in MMD worry AVAP” by Zambia’s *Saturday Post* (31 October 2009). The article is about intraparty wrangles in the MMD which resulted in the expulsion of Kasama District chairwoman Brilliant Sefuke. The story highlighted the participation of women leaders in political processes and how power relations play in intra-party conflicts. The story is gender aware in that it gives agency to the woman leader who has been expelled from the MMD. The woman openly challenges the national executive committee and also the MMD to be democratic and treat politicians both women and men fairly. This is a good example of women who have been empowered to occupy positions in politics, a sphere predominated by men. Her challenging the expulsion is encouraging to women politicians to participate in party politics, as there are few women political leaders in Africa.

Genre

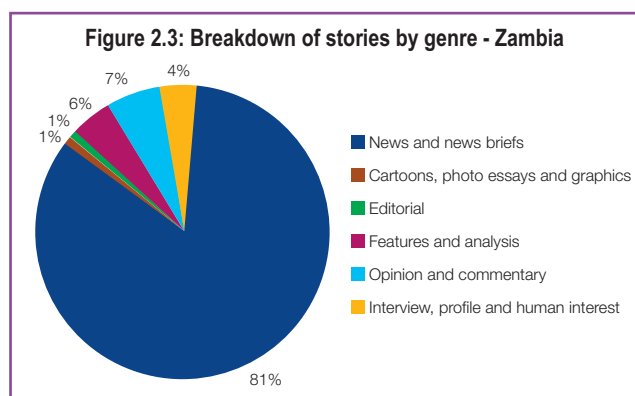
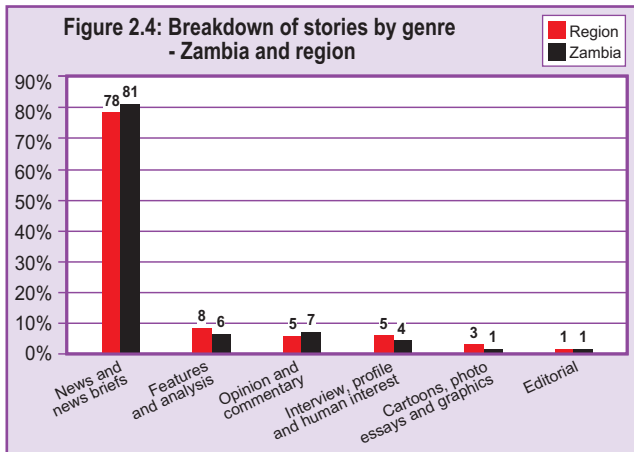


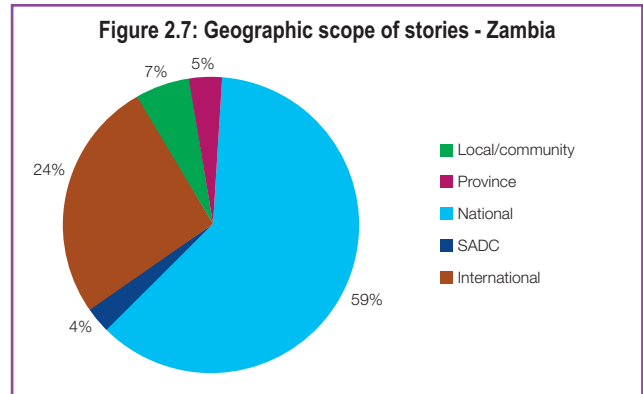
Figure 2.3 shows the breakdown of genres in Zambia and figure 2.4 compares this with the region, illustrating a similar spread. News and news briefs make up the majority of stories in Zambia at 81%, slightly higher than the regional average of 78%. There are more opinions and commentaries in Zambia (7%) than in the region (5%), but overall

the findings mean that the media both in Zambia and in the SADC region shy away from in-depth stories, such as features and analysis, opinion, commentary, interviews, profiles and human interest stories, preferring self-generating event-based news and news briefs.



on news agencies (27%) in Zambia than in the region (17%). Unknown authors, court reports/documents and press releases came in third at 7% in Zambia and 14% in the region. These are symptoms of easy solutions to fill pages and news categories rather than actively pursuing news.

Geographic scope



Origin

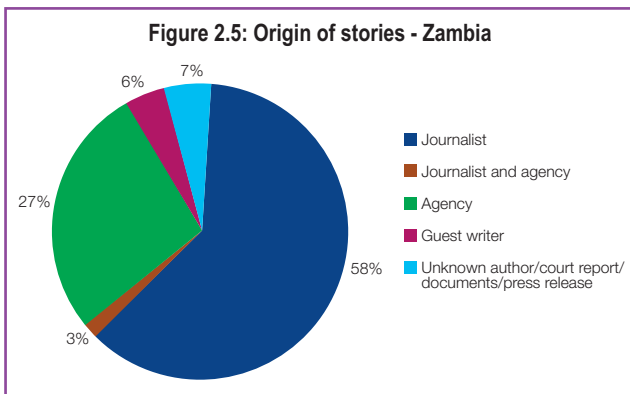


Figure 2.7 illustrates the geographic scope of stories in Zambia, and figure 2.8 compares this with the region. National stories make up 59% in Zambia and 42% regionally of news reports. Local/community (7%) news in Zambia is lower than the regional average of 18%. This is correlated to the higher proportion of news obtained from sources other than own reporters, and is another indicator that media practice in Zambia needs strengthening.

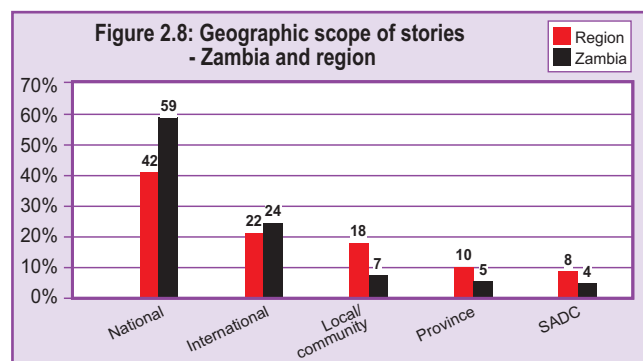
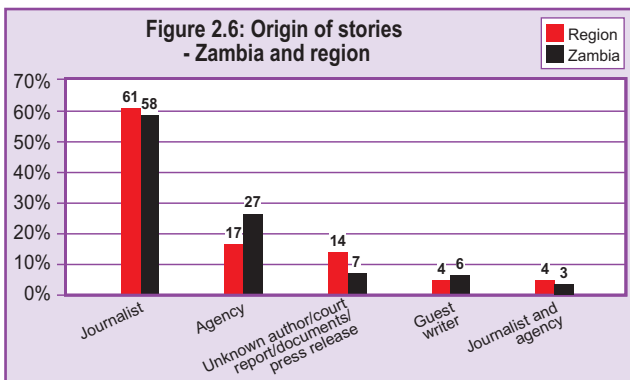


Figure 2.5 shows the origin of stories in Zambia, while figure 2.6 compares these with the rest of the region. In Zambia, coverage by in-house journalists accounts for 58%, slightly lower than the regional average of 61%. There is a higher degree of reliance

Types of sources

A primary source is one in which a subject is interviewed, whereas a secondary source is a report or hearsay. Reliance on the latter is a symptom of weak journalistic practice. In principle, every story should have primary sources, even if they are based on a secondary source. For example, if a story is about a report that has just been released, it should quote those affected. If it is about a rumour, it should seek verification from a variety of sources.

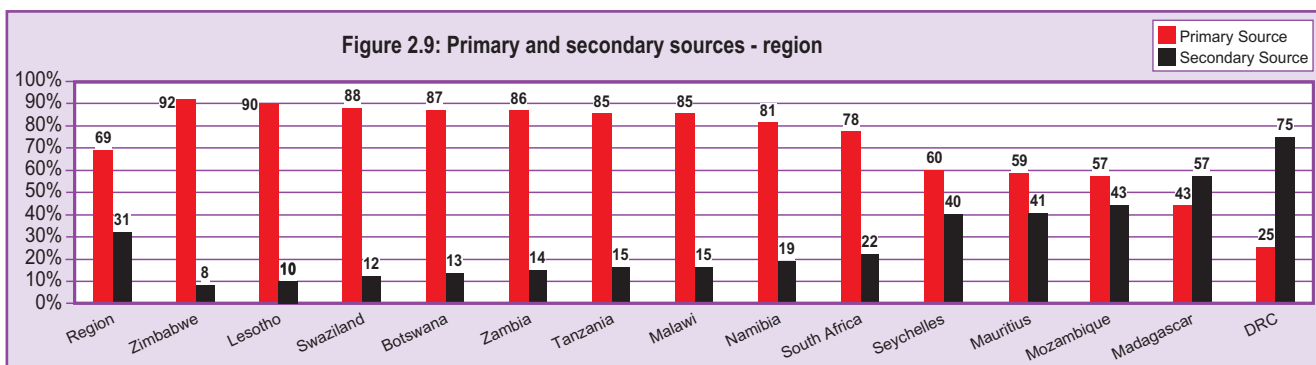


Figure 2.9 shows that, at 86% of stories based on primary sources, Zambia ranks among the best in this criterion in the region. This is higher than the regional average of 69%. This means that journalism standards in Zambia are better than in most countries, in that over-reliance on secondary sources is considered to be a questionable journalistic practice.

With 92% of stories based on primary sources, Zimbabwe scores best against this indicator and

DRC at 25% scores the lowest. The fact that two countries in post-conflict political situations, which are also facing economic challenges, score best and worst is an interesting rejoinder to the argument often made in media circles that poor journalistic practice is a result of economic constraints - such as that journalists not having access to phones and transport. If journalists in Zimbabwe, who operate in difficult economic circumstances, are able to access primary sources, so should those in Zambia, who have considerably more resources at their disposal.

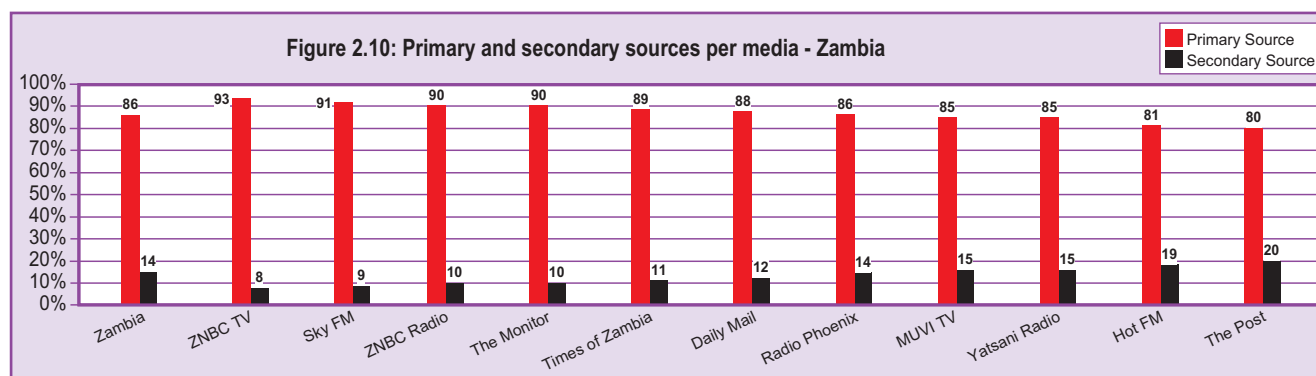


Figure 2.10 illustrates the proportion of primary and secondary sources per media in Zambia. It shows a positive result for public media - ZNBC TV (93%) had the highest proportion of primary sources while ZNBC Radio came in third. The Post (80%) and Hot FM (81%) had the lowest proportions of primary sources. With all the media at the 80% level and above, the findings show that generally the media in Zambia rely on primary sources, faring better than the regional average of 69%.

Anonymity

Anonymity refers to use of sources which are not known or who are not willing to reveal their identities. Identified sources give stories credibility. Although it is sometimes necessary, particularly for sensitive or investigative reporting where sources fear victimisation, it is not considered sound journalistic practice and often reflects a lack of professionalism. It also encourages laziness among journalists and diminishes the credibility of stories and the media.

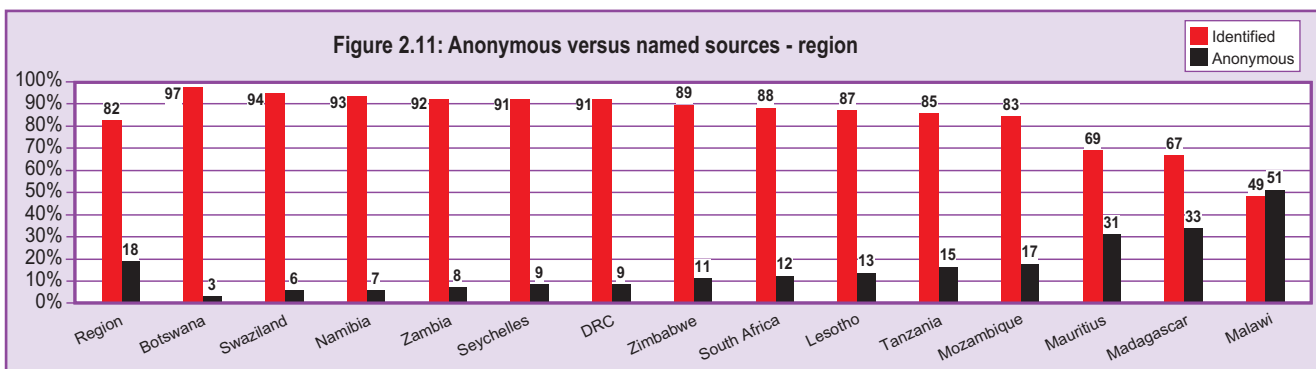


Figure 2.11 shows that most media in the region identify sources, with the exception of Malawi where a greater number of sources there is a higher proportion of anonymous sources at 51%. 18% of stories in the region are based on anonymous sources. With 9% anonymous sources, Zambia performs better than the region and considerably better than Malawi. Zambia is ranked fourth after Botswana, Swaziland and Namibia. Botswana performs best measured against this indicator with 97% identified sources.

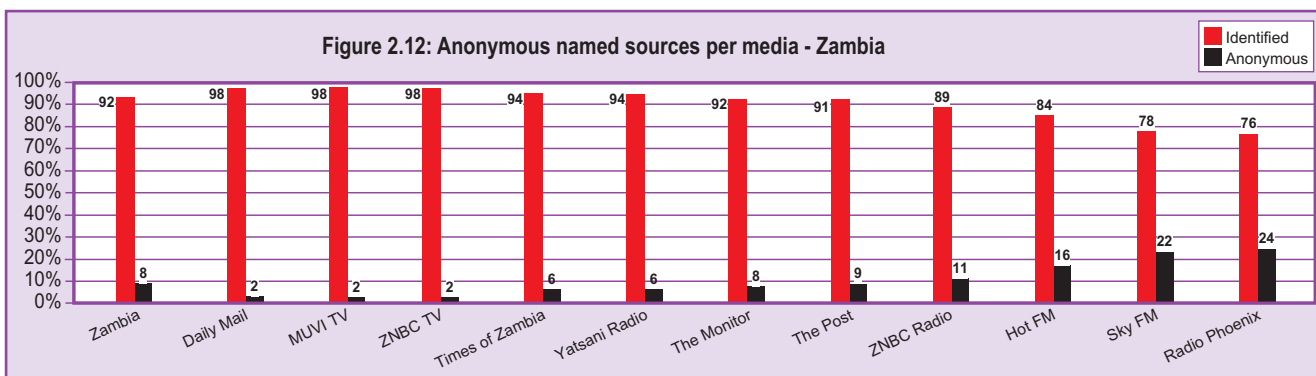


Figure 2.12 shows variations between media houses in Zambia in terms of the proportion of anonymous versus identified sources. The high performing media houses were *Daily Mail* and *MUVI TV* at 2% anonymous sources, while the lowest performers were *Sky FM* (22%) and *Radio Phoenix* (24%). It is worrying that the proportion of anonymous sources is higher in the radio stations monitored as radio, being an audio medium, relies on actuality more than print media. It might therefore be expected to have a lower proportion of anonymous sources.

Single versus multiple source stories

Reliance on a single source is a reflection of lack of professionalism that has gender dimensions. In a male-dominated society, if only one source is consulted there is a strong likelihood that the source will be a man. Single source stories often lack balance as they do not allow for a diversity of opinions. With the exception of very short news briefs, every story in the media should have more than one source.

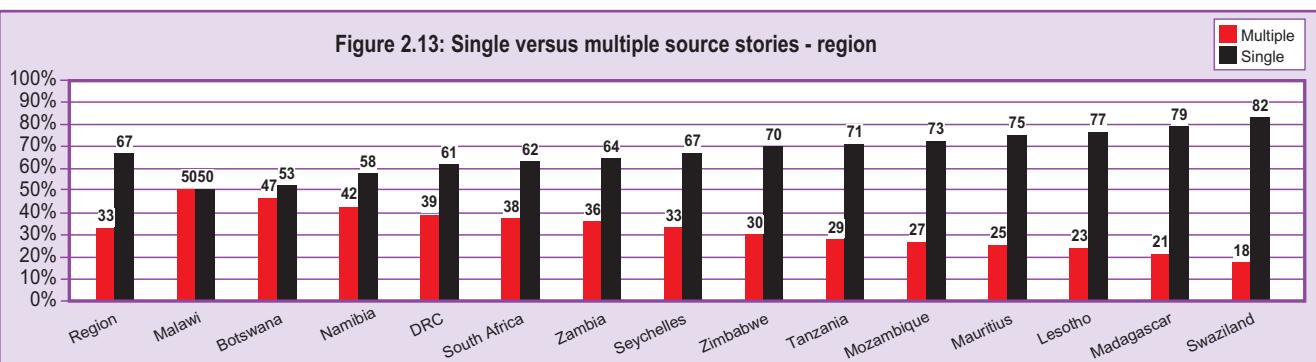


Figure 2.13 shows the proportion of single to multiple sources in Zambia compared with the region. At 36% multiple source stories, Zambia is ranked sixth in the region. Malawi is the best performer in the region followed by Botswana, Namibia, DRC, and South Africa. These findings reflect a lack of diversity of sources in

news stories, which partly explains the poor representation of women in the news. If one source is quoted in a news story, it is likely to be a man. More than half of stories in Zambia (64%) are based on single sources. The findings on single source stories are among the most worrying across the region.

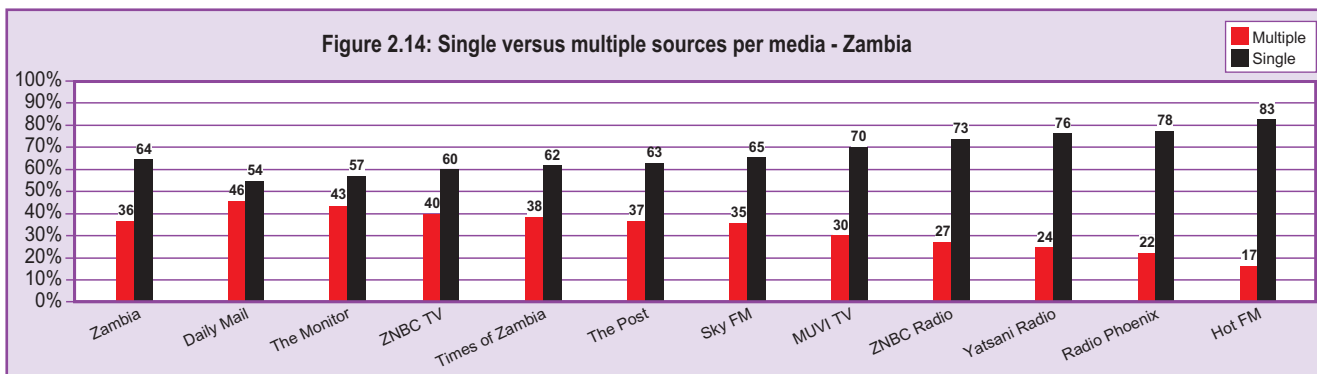


Figure 2.14 shows that radio had the highest proportion of single source stories (*Hot FM* had 83%, *Radio Phoenix* 78%, *Yatsani Radio* 76% and *ZNBC* 73%). This is concerning as the principle of multiple sources applies as much to radio as to other mediums. *Daily Mail* had the lowest proportion of single source stories at 54%.

Function

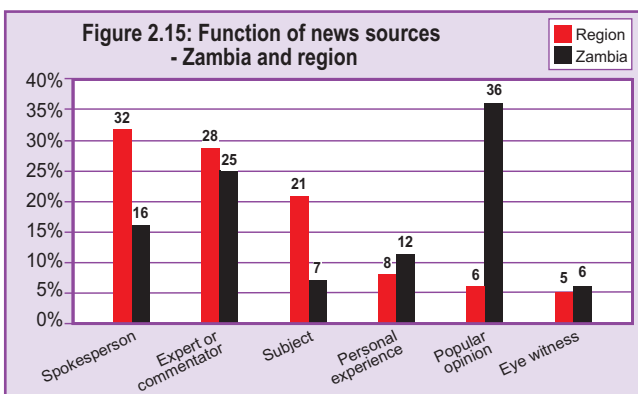


Figure 2.15 compares the function of news sources in Zambia with the region. In Zambia, popular opinion (36%) dominates as news sources followed by experts or commentators (25%) and spokespersons (16%). Personal experience in Zambia accounts for 12% - a third higher than the regional average of 8%. Popular opinion and personal experience are categories in which "ordinary people" are most likely to be heard.

Conclusions

During the consultative workshop on the draft the Zambia GMPS report in August 2010, participants

were disappointed by the findings on general media practice.

Edward Musonda, a reporter with Palisah News Agency (private) observed that journalists were not attempting to balance their sources: "The responsibility lies with editors who should reject [gender unbalanced] stories. The problem with Zambian editors is that they are not experienced. Some journalists have been in the field for less than two years and the next thing they are promoted to editors. Their stories are shallow. I agree with these findings - they are a true reflection of the Zambian media." Musonda also noted the need to understand the Zambian media environment: "Mainstream media are operating with an agenda and only look for sources to support that agenda. All media houses in the country are biased by source selection and story placement."

Madube Pasi-Siyauya, GEMSA Zambia chairperson, said stories in the media are "boring" because journalists rely on official sources instead of extracting stories from the layperson: "One of the reasons why stories in the media are boring is that journalists prefer officials and sources in authority, even on issues happening in communities. The stories have gaps, [and] missing information because the right people will not have been sourced."

Participants agreed that there was a need for media in Zambia to improve the quality of journalism through "going back to basics". This, they noted, will ensure stories are both balanced and gender aware.