



# GENDER AND MEDIA MONITORING

## FEDERATION OF AFRICAN MEDIA WOMEN ZIMBABWE (FAMWZ)

**Measuring progress: Media and Gender before and beyond the 16 Days Campaign of activism against Gender Based Violence.**

### INTRODUCTION

United States secretary for foreign Affairs, Hillary Rodham Clinton once famously said, ***“There cannot be true democracy unless women’s voices are heard”***.

Largely thanks to a pro-active and vigilante women’s movement in Zimbabwe and the world over, women have made significant progress in pushing frontiers and getting their voices heard as full and equal citizens with a right to dignity and self-determination.

In Zimbabwe, this drive by women has seen some key milestones being achieved in order to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment. These include policy and legislative reforms and the expansion of spaces and platforms for the realisations of women’s rights. For example, the Zimbabwean government is signatory to various regional and international conventions and treaties, declarations and protocols that seek to promote and create an enabling environment for the attainment of gender equality women’s empowerment. These include the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (1991), the

nts; the Global Platform for Action and the  
onal level, the country in 1997 signed the SADC  
ment as well as its addendum on the Prevention  
Women and Children.

At a domestic level, the Legal Age of Majority Act, the Sexual Offences Act, and the Domestic Violence Act are some of the legislation enacted to promote gender equality and protect women's rights. The National Gender Policy (2002) provides guidelines and the institutional framework to engender all sectoral policies, programmes, projects and activities at all levels of society and the economy. Gender focal points have been established in all ministries and parastatals to spearhead gender mainstreaming. In 1995, the government formed the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development to oversee all gender programmes and to facilitate gender mainstreaming in all sector ministries. Some initiatives by the ministry have seen the adoption of the 16 Days Campaign Against gender-based violence as an all-year campaign. Some initiatives adopted in order to raise awareness include the annual 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence, and more recently, the One Billion Rising Campaign, among others.

However, as legislated discrimination against women continues to progressively fall away, a complementary change in mindsets and attitudes learned through socialisation needs to take place if gender equality is to be a lived reality for both women and men.

As an agent of socialisation, the media play an important role in this regard. Not only do they report on current events but they also provide frameworks for interpretation, mobilise citizens with regard to various issues, reproduce predominant culture and society and entertain (Llanos and Nina, 2011)<sup>1</sup>. As such, the media present an important tool in the promotion of women's rights and gender equality, both through employment opportunities and the representation of women and men in a fair and balanced manner.

This study therefore seeks to assess the media's role in reporting on women and gender issues and thereby the media's contribution towards a sustained and positive societal appreciation of women's rights and gender equality. This will be done on a comparative basis with the 2011 Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ) report on the 16 Days Campaign Against Gender Based Violence

## GENDER

Sex refers to the biological and physiological differences between males and females. Gender, on the other hand, refers to the socially constructed behaviours and roles that are attributed to or associated with men and women in a particular society at a particular time. The roles are context/time specific, and evolve with time.

Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies, Zimbabwe included, there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities

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<sup>1</sup> Llanos, B. and Nina, J., 2011, 'Election Coverage from a Gender Perspective: A Media Monitoring Manual', UN Women How can the media contribute to gender: [www.gsdr.org/go/topic-guides/gender/gender-and-media](http://www.gsdr.org/go/topic-guides/gender/gender-and-media) (accessed on 24/2)

## GENDER AND MEDIA

***“Gender equality does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female,”*** ABC of women Workers’ rights and gender equality, ILO (UNESCO 2009: p4).

The media have a very important role in this transformative process as they shape public opinion and influence policymaking, which in turn influences legislation and resource allocation.

In fact, due to their wide reach and role as opinion leaders, the media play a key role in providing visibility, legitimacy and credibility to an issue and in this particular case, women’s rights and gender equality.

It is in this vein that Section J of the Beijing Platform for Action recognises the media as a critical concern in promoting a balanced and non-stereotypical portrayal of women in the media as well as increasing the participation and access of women to expression and decision making.

Closer to home, the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (2008) calls on the media to mainstream gender in all laws, policies and training. The media is also challenged to ensure equal numbers of men and women in all areas and levels by 2015 and ensure they are given equal coverage. The media is also urged to challenge stereotypes and be sensitive in coverage of topics like gender based violence.

## JUSTIFICATION

The media play a key role in the liberation of minds and creating a conducive environment for the attainment of gender equality and women’s rights due to their pervasive influence. This study will therefore help establish to what extent the media have mainstreamed gender equality and women’s rights into their daily coverage and to determine whether the kind of gender sensitive coverage displayed during the 16 Days Campaign is a knee-jerk reaction to the campaign or an integral part of the media’s treatment.

The report will therefore serve as an advocacy tool in engaging the media and other stakeholders as well as helping to re-evaluate strategies and interventions.

## METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE OF STUDY

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<sup>2</sup> (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm>) (accessed 21/2/13)

assessment of the media's coverage of gender and the period after the 16 Days of Activism in order to evaluate the extent to which the media had gender equality into their coverage of issues. Comparison will therefore be made with documented media performance in covering the 16 Days Campaign against gender-based violence using the report produced by the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe as a baseline.

The study covers a two-week period, after the 2011 Sixteen Days of Activism against gender based violence period and another week in January 2013 after 2012's campaign. A period where no gender specific event take place was randomly selected to ensure that the coverage monitored reflects the media's regular coverage. The research therefore covers the week 22 to 31 October 2012 and the week 22 to 31 January in the post 16 Days phase.

The papers monitored are *The Herald* and the *NewsDay* and all content on gender and women's issues was monitored.

In terms of methodology, the study utilised a twin track approach of gender-specific analysis and gender-mainstreaming analysis. A gender specific approach involved a content analysis of all the media's gender-related stories and reports relating to women's concerns such as, for example, empowerment, domestic violence which mainly affects women, pregnancy and maternal health, breast and cervical cancer.

A gender-mainstreaming assessment involved analysing to what extent gender as an underlying factor has been integrated into reportage of all issues be they political, economic, business, and so on.

In carrying out content analysis, the study utilised the triangular test as a tool to determine gender equity in coverage. The triangular test comprises three basic elements, which are: angling of story, depth of coverage and breadth of coverage (Colleen Lowe Morna 2002)<sup>3</sup>. The breadth or spectrum of coverage includes among other things, basically examines the range of gender issues discussed in the media, what categories are covered and what categories are missing. Depth of coverage on the other hand includes sourcing patterns, extent of investigation or enquiry, language, context and balance as well as ability to use a gender lens. Story angling analyses the patterns of portrayal in terms of fairness, accuracy, stereotyping etc.

The findings are presented in two sections, the quantitative analysis and the qualitative analysis. The report is capped by a conclusion and recommendations.

## FIGURE ONE: THE TRIANGULAR TEST FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN

### COVERAGE<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Morna, C. (2002) A Southern African Toolkit. (accessed from [portal.unesco.org/en/files/47654/12737402501Gender\\_Toolkit\\_for\\_Educators.pdf/Gender%2BToolkit%2Bfor%2BEducators.pdf](http://portal.unesco.org/en/files/47654/12737402501Gender_Toolkit_for_Educators.pdf/Gender%2BToolkit%2Bfor%2BEducators.pdf) 25/2/13 )

<sup>4</sup>ibid



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## Depth of coverage

Angle

From

Which the

Story is

Told

## Breadth of coverage

## Structure of the report

The research findings are presented in two sections: the quantitative findings and the qualitative findings, followed by a conclusion and recommendations.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

***“It matters profoundly who and what is selected to appear in news coverage and how individuals are portrayed. Equally it matters who is left out and what is not covered”<sup>5</sup>.***

The study by the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe on the media’s coverage of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence in 2011 highlights that violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread but least recognised abuses in the world. The MMPZ survey was therefore used as a baseline study to assess how media covered issues relating to women’s rights and gender equality outside the 16 Days campaign. This would help determine the extent to which gender issues have been mainstreamed into the media’s coverage or whether the kind of reportage seen during the Sixteen Days is a knee-jerk reaction to the Campaign.

Two daily papers, the privately-owned *NewsDay* and the state-controlled ‘*The Herald*’ were monitored over a two week period cutting across the years 2012 and

<sup>5</sup> Gallagher, M (2005). Who makes the news: Global Media Monitoring Project. World Association for Christian Communication.

ports carried by the two papers over the two gender-specific stories that were specifically coverage on these issues. The study findings coverage after the 16 Days campaign as

demonstrated by the summary of findings that follows:

- **Gender Equality and Women's Rights remain a low priority on the news agenda.**

Only 88 of the 1 167 reports monitored paid specific attention to issues of gender equality and women's rights during the period reviewed. This constitutes a mere 8% of total content.

- **Ghettoisation of gender equality to the 16 Days Campaign**

The study findings strongly suggest a ghettoisation of gender equality and women's rights as isolated and separate concerns from mainstream issues and activities. While the media carried 88 reports on gender-related issues, the majority of their 1 079 reports on other topics like politics, business, economy etc made no effort to explore gender as a cross-cutting and underlying factor to every issue.

Furthermore, the coverage of gender issues in just 8% of content compared to the avalanche of gender aware stories during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence demonstrates that the media largely wake up to these issues as a societal concern during the 10day commemoration and thereafter continue with business as usual.

- **Who speaks?**

More female voices were quoted in the current study compared to the 2011 Sixteen Days Campaign report.

| Who speaks? | Oct. 2012 & Jan. 2013 | 2012 Sixteen Days Campaign report |
|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Male        | 45%                   | 56%                               |
| Female      | 55%                   | 44%                               |

- **Women speak more on entertainment issues.**

The voice sourcing patterns were also analysed according to emerging themes to see men and women's level of contribution to each topic. In the current study, women's voices were heard the most on entertainment than on any other topic where they constituted 21 voices.

- **Who reports?**

the 88 bylines recorded in the period under review while the majority of stories 32 reporters were not

- **Depth and context.**

The heavy reliance on news stories rather than news features and analysis by the media during the period under review means that there is limited depth and context to issues of gender equality and women's rights when these are covered in the media.

- **Event-driven reportage**

Both the current study and the 16 Days 2011 survey highlight that coverage of gender equality and women's rights is primarily event-driven, constituting less than 50% of content in both periods. During the period under review, self-generated content on these issues constituted 26% of content compared to 46% during the 2011 Sixteen Days campaign period.

- **The missing stories and perspectives**

In terms of covering gender-based violence, the study shows a limited spectrum of stories, mainly negative and disempowering. The reportage is event-driven, thereby exclusively portraying

Women as victims. Stories of prevention and survival on gender based violence that would prove more empowering for readers are missing. This is in contrast to the 2011 Sixteen Days period in which stories were clearly situated within a human-rights framework and presented as a societal concern rather than a personal tragedy.

- **'Seen' but not heard**

Although the women were quoted more than men during the period reviewed, in some instances women are still more likely to be 'seen' than heard. These reports portrayed women as passive, as a constituency to be seen but not heard. This was mostly evident in reports about women but which ultimately fail to give them a voice to express themselves. This is in contrast to the 16 Days campaign where women were mostly heard expressing themselves in line with the theme.

- **Obscuring gender based violence and abuse**

While the 2011 study shows that the media are very clear in identifying gender based violence for what it is during the 16 Days campaign period, in the period under review the media showed a propensity by the media to obscure gender-based violence especially in cases where the victim goes on to commit murder or suicide.

- **Women in traditional roles**

While women during the 16 Days campaign are seen in the diversity of their roles, the study suggests that in regular coverage women are more likely to be portrayed in traditional roles even when they engage in public sphere activities. Women

scribed in ways and with words that  
wives.

But there are some positive signs of progress which include raising the awareness of the role of women in nation building processes; stories that challenge stereotypes and advocate for a holistic approach to gender based violence in the media.

However, the main finding is that both in terms of quantity and quality of coverage, gender equality and women's rights have been ghettoised to the 16 Days campaign and stand-alone issues from the rest of what are considered to be mainstream issues.

## QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

This section presents the quantitative findings of the study in terms of the key issues identified.

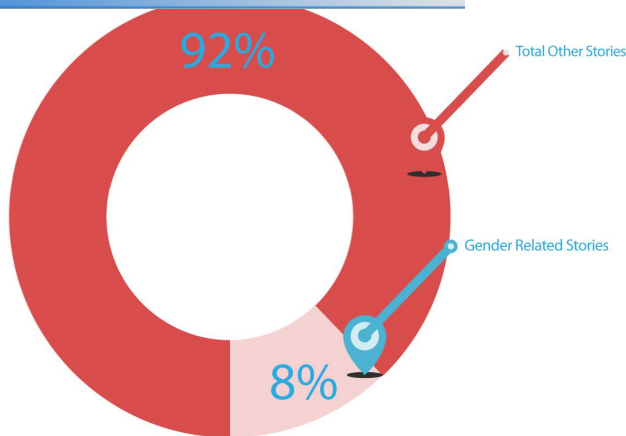
### 1. The invisibility of gender on the news agenda

Only 88 of the 1 167 reports carried by the media reviewed during this period paid attention to gender-related issues and women's specific concerns. This constitutes a mere 8% of coverage, suggesting that gender remains a low priority on the media's news agenda. This is in sharp to the 16 Days campaign period that is marked by an avalanche of reports on gender and women's rights.

Analysed at individual level, *The Herald* newspaper paid more attention to gender issues as it carried 51 reports compared to the *NewsDay's* 37 stories.

Fig. 1 illustrates the amount of gender-related content in the media as a percentage of total media coverage during the period reviewed.

**Fig. 1: Gender equality on the news agenda**



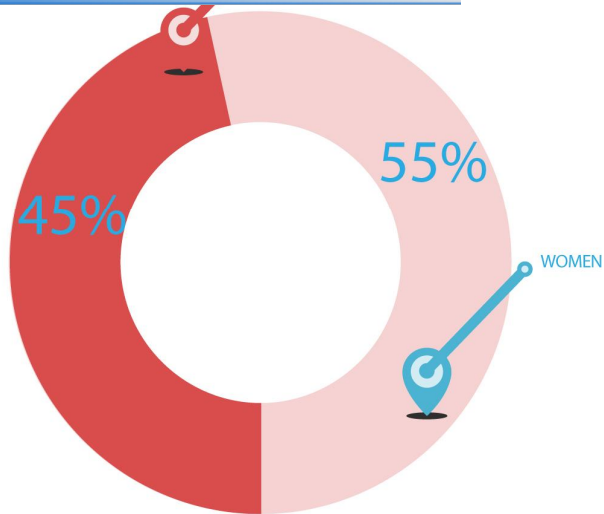
### 1.1 Ghettoisation of gender on the news agenda

While the media carried 88 reports on gender and women’s concerns, none of the 1 079 reports on other topics like business, economy, and politics made an effort to explore gender as a cross-cutting and underlying factor to every development. The study findings suggest the ghettoisation of gender and women’s concerns as isolated and separate concerns from what is considered “mainstream” business and activities by the reviewed mainstream dailies as it was exclusively relegated to the 8% of the reviewed content.

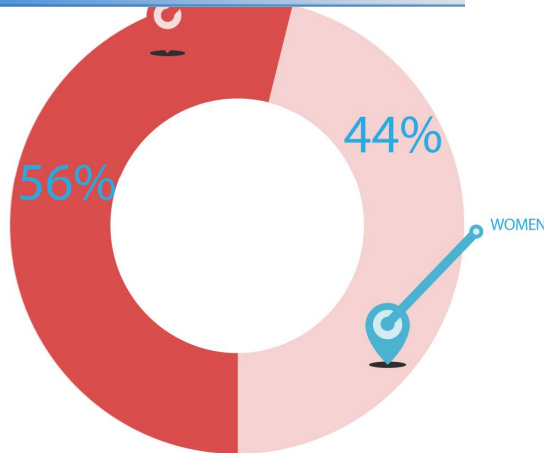
### 1.2 Who speaks?

A total of 118 voices were recorded in the reports related to gender and women’s specific concerns during the period in the media reviewed. Women outspoke men, as they constituted 55% (65) of the identified sources compared to 45% (53) for men. This compares well to the 2011 study of the 16 Days Campaign by MMPZ that showed that men spoke more than women on the subject. In the 2011 study, men constituted 56% of sources and women 54%. This is illustrated in Fig. 2.

**Fig. 2: Who speaks? (Oct. 2012 & Jan. 2013)**



**Fig.3: Who speaks? (16 Days Campaign 2011)**



Analysed by individual media house, *The Herald* once more accorded more space to women's voices compared to the *NewsDay*. The public daily paper featured women's voices 43 in stories compared to the privately owned daily that quoted women in 22 stories in the reports monitored.

### 1.3 What were the stories about?

The study also examined the themes and range of stories to see what issues pertaining to gender equality and women were being reported on.

Themes in media coverage during both the 16 Days campaign and the periods after the campaign suggest a need for the media to step up in their coverage of gender equality and women's rights. As shown in Fig. 5, although the media carried a large number of stories during the 2011 sixteen Days Campaign, most of the stories were actually based on the marriage saga between Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai and his estranged lover Locardia Karimatsenga rather than the campaign itself and follow-up stories to the campaign. Similarly, in the post-16 Days period, women mostly appeared in entertainment stories, and then followed by crime and sexual violence stories. However, while the tone of coverage was mostly empowering during the 16 Days campaign, in the post-16 Days period the media appeared to perpetuate stereotypes in their coverage of gender equality and women. Success stories of women in their diversity of roles were few and far in between as evidenced by the fact that they were mostly seen in entertainment, crime and sexual violence stories. In addition, some dimensions reported during the 16 Days campaign, such as gender and HIV/AIDS, were missing in the post-16 Days coverage. These patterns are reflected in Figs. 4 and 5.

**Fig. 4: Themes in media coverage (Oct 2012 & Jan 2013)**



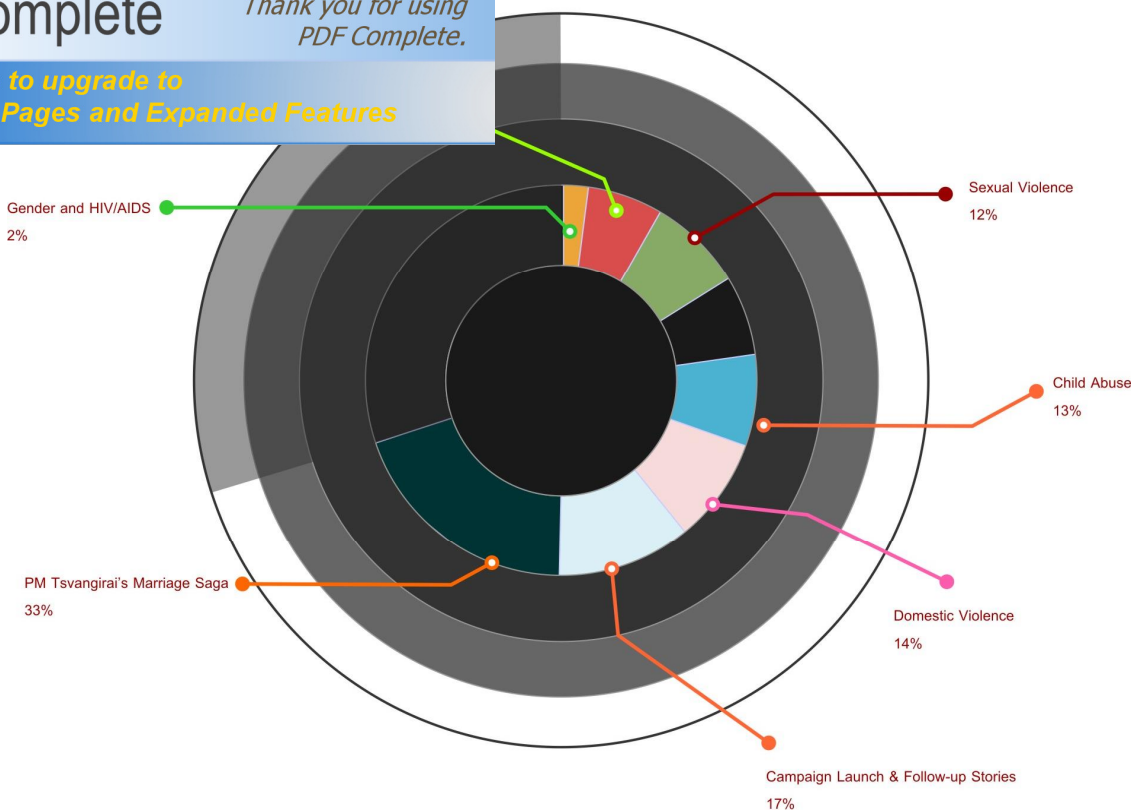
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|                               |    | <b>NewsDay</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|-------------------------------|----|----------------|--------------|
|                               |    | 1              | 1            |
| Entertainment                 | 10 | 7              | 17           |
| Domestic Violence             | 2  | 2              | 4            |
| Politics and governance       | 4  | 4              | 8            |
| Crime                         | 4  | 8              | 12           |
| Business/Economic Empowerment | 4  | 2              | 6            |
| Sexual violence               | 8  | 4              | 12           |
| Health                        | 2  | 3              | 5            |
| Sanitation                    | 0  | 1              | 1            |
| Marital law                   | 2  | 1              | 3            |
| Other                         | 4  | 3              | 7            |
| Child abuse                   | 1  | 1              | 2            |
| Religion                      | 1  | 0              | 1            |
| Livelihood                    | 1  | 0              | 1            |
| Education                     | 3  | 0              | 3            |
| Divorce/Maintenance           | 2  | 0              | 2            |
| Sex work                      | 1  | 0              | 1            |
| Accidents                     | 1  | 0              | 1            |

**Fig. 5: Themes in media coverage (16 Days Campaign 2011)**



## 1.4 Who speaks on what?

While the study findings suggesting that women are feeling empowered enough to speak out or that the media is seeking out their voice, it is also imperative to analyse what issues they mostly responded to or were heard commenting on. Thus the study also made a voice breakdown of sources to ascertain the issues that men and women spoke about. Whereas during the 2011 Sixteen Days Campaign of Activism Against GBV women mainly spoke of gender based violence, its nature and prevalence. They talked about victimisation, prevention and survival. They talked about legislative remedies and sources of support.

In the period reviewed, women were mostly quoted on arts and entertainment issues. This was mostly in stories about the Miss Curvy pageant, the Elite model contest, pole dancer Beverly's shows and other such stories.

The voice distribution of sources according to theme is illustrated in Fig. 6.



|                                   | ces | Male sources |
|-----------------------------------|-----|--------------|
|                                   |     | 9            |
| Maintenance/Divorce               | 4   | 1            |
| Domestic Violence                 | 5   | 3            |
| Crime                             | 3   | 4            |
| Sex work                          | 2   | 1            |
| Entertainment                     | 21  | 12           |
| Accidents                         | 0   | 1            |
| Politics                          | 5   | 3            |
| Other                             | 6   | 4            |
| Health                            | 7   | 2            |
| Marital law                       | 0   | 2            |
| Labour                            | 1   | 1            |
| Sanitation                        | 0   | 0            |
| Religion                          | 2   | 0            |
| Livelihood                        | 2   | 5            |
| Child abuse                       | 0   | 1            |
| Education                         | 2   | 3            |
| Economic empowerment<br>/Business | 4   | 1            |

## 1.5 Who reports on what?

A total of 88 bylines were recorded during the period under review. Female journalists constituted 23 bylines, compared to 33 male journalists. As reflected in Fig. 7, female journalists reported more on entertainment and arts than on any other issue while the majority of stories had no bylines.

Another key issue is that while male journalists reported on almost all the identified themes, female journalists were missing from a majority of the themes including labour, crime, education, divorce/maintenance, sanitation, and domestic violence, among others.

However, a majority of the reports, 32, ran under unnamed bylines and this could affect the level of male/female journalist reportage on gender equality and women's rights.



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|                                  |   | ists | Female<br>journalists | Unknown/No<br>byline |
|----------------------------------|---|------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Labour                           | 0 |      | 0                     | 1                    |
| Entertainment                    | 7 |      | 6                     | 2                    |
| Domestic Violence                | 3 |      | 0                     | 4                    |
| Politics and<br>governance       | 6 |      | 2                     | 0                    |
| Crime                            | 6 |      | 0                     | 6                    |
| Business/Economic<br>Empowerment | 2 |      | 4                     | 0                    |
| Sexual violence                  | 2 |      | 0                     | 10                   |
| Health                           | 4 |      | 1                     | 0                    |
| Sanitation                       | 1 |      | 0                     | 0                    |
| Marital law                      | 1 |      | 2                     | 0                    |
| Other                            | 3 |      | 3                     | 1                    |
| Child abuse                      | 2 |      | 0                     | 0                    |
| Religion                         | 0 |      | 0                     | 1                    |
| Livelihood                       | 0 |      | 1                     | 0                    |
| Education                        | 3 |      | 0                     | 0                    |
| Divorce/Maintenance              | 0 |      | 0                     | 2                    |
| Sex work                         | 1 |      | 0                     | 0                    |
| Accidents                        | 0 |      | 0                     | 1                    |

issues both during and after the 16 Days  
ent-based and event- driven, rather than self-  
generated and self-initiated by the media. This is captured in Fig. 8:

Fig. 8: Independent media coverage of gender and women

Fig. 8a: Oct. 2012 & Jan. 2013

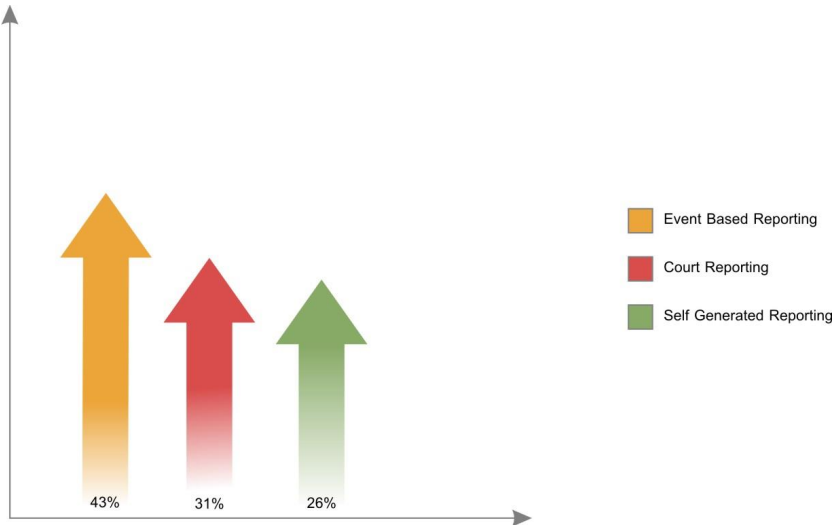
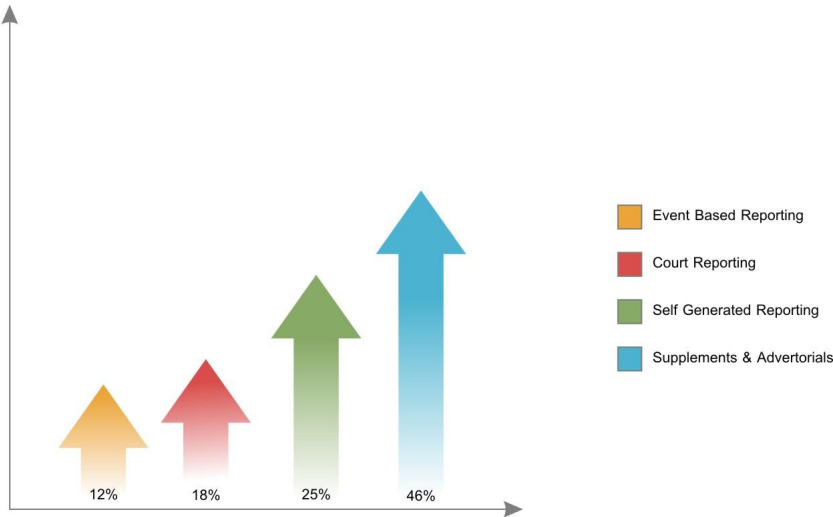


Fig. 8b: 16 Days Campaign 2011



in a story, providing a first hand account of the of the 88 reviewed reports relied on women as primary sources of information. While this is commendable, an analysis of the functions of sources as shown in Fig. 9 indicates that women were quoted more as a result of their functions, rather than an independent effort by the media to deliberately include women. These include professional roles like magistrates, lawyers, or organisational spokespersons among other professional roles.

**Fig.9: Voice sourcing patterns**



## ng stereotypes

gorised according to whether they challenge types or they neither reinforce nor challenge stereotypes. As shown in Fig.10, 31% of reportage clearly challenged stereotypes; however, 38% of stories reinforced stereotypes of women as homemakers and pretty, sometimes curvaceous models, victims of various misfortunes. Thirty-two percent of reports neither clearly challenged nor reinforced stereotypes.

**Fig.10: Challenging and reinforcing stereotypes**

| Number of stories<br>Challenging stereotypes | Number of stories<br>Reinforcing stereotypes | Number of stories<br>Neither challenging nor<br>reinforcing |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| 27                                           | 33                                           | 28                                                          |

- Superficial coverage?**

Another key finding of the study is the heavy reliance on news stories rather than opinion pieces and news analysis to report on gender issues. As a result, there is limited depth and context to reports that would provide a multiplicity of views and perspectives on gender issues. Eighty five percent of the reports stories reviewed were news stories, compared to15% for both opinion and news analysis.

themes and patterns in media coverage in a highlighting both the continued shortfalls and progressive elements in media reportage.

## The shortfalls / Key challenges identified

- **‘Seen’ but not heard**

Although the women were quoted more than men during the period reviewed, in some instances women are still more likely to be seen than heard. These reports portrayed women as passive, as a constituency to be seen but not heard. This was mostly evident in reports about women but which ultimately fail to give them a voice to express themselves. Several examples abound. *The Herald* (30/1/13) report titled “*Chihuri urges women to vote*” illustrates this point. The report is based on a leadership workshop convened by the Kuyedza women’s club in Selous. Although the report is a positive example of women as agents of change in their lives and nation building processes, the only voice in the story and the central character of the story is Commissioner-General Augustine Chihuri who is reported as having urged “**wives of senior officers**” to remain patriotic and vote for ZANU PF in the forthcoming elections. In addition, the report prominently identifies the women as “wives” as if their gathering is motivated by their marital status rather than a proactive decision to be agents of change in their own right.

The *Newsday* (26/10/12) “*Mahofa under probe*” story further underlines this point. Although Shuvai Mahofa is the central news subject, her voice is not heard in the story to respond to the accusations against her. The story is exclusively based on unnamed sources, no evidence of the probe is provided and neither is there corroboration from other credible sources like the police.

Another example is the story of Mushandu to contest at Elite Model look finale (Newsday 24/10/12). Although former Miss Zimbabwe Malaika Mushandu is the central subject of the story, her voice is missing from the story that only relies on comment from Elite Model Executive director Janice Costa.

- **Aspiring female politicians as ‘wives’**

Women forging new political ground often struggle to receive media coverage and legitimacy in the eyes of the media and, subsequently, the public. They are described in ways and with words that emphasize their traditional roles and focus on their appearance and behavior. This was illustrated by the report “Ministers’ wives eye party seats” (NewsDay 25/10/13). The women, Sikhanyisiwe Mpofu and Rose Nkomo are identified as the “**wives of Mines minister Obert Mpofu and his Water Resources counterpart Samuel Sipepa Nkomo**” in the introduction and mainly referred to as either Mpofu’s wife or Nkomo’s spouse in the story. Thus their ambition and success is linked to their husbands’ achievements rather than initiative and capability on their part.

by negative spectrum of stories on women, majority of reports mainly portrayed women in a range of unfavourable roles such as victims of domestic violence, or perpetrators of crimes and in some instances abuses, or as sex workers. Success stories are far, few and in between. When it comes to gender based violence, stories of prevention and survival, remedies and psychosocial support are completely missing from coverage.

- **Moralising**

Issues of sensationalism and gender insensitivity also continue to obscure the real issues of concern when women are reported on. This fact is illustrated by *The Herald* (24/1/13) report “*When your mother is a sex worker*”. The report explores the difficulties faced by children whose mothers are engaged in sex work. However, it does so in a judgemental way largely minimises the challenges faced by commercial sex workers or the underlying factors, narrowly stereotyping them as irresponsible mothers. Furthermore, while the story emphasises the role mothers are expected to play in nurturing and caring for the family and children, it is glaringly silent on the expected roles of fathers and in this particular story, the absent fathers as commercial sex workers struggle to fend for their babies. The article argues:

***“Such is a tear drawing life that subsists between commercial sex workers and their tender babies as they hop from one night spot to another for prospective clients for the day. While she dances sensually in clubs, throwing arms around different men, back home, her feeble young baby will be yelling for warmth of those arms – what a hell for the baby. Nights are spent with the mother enjoying the climax of joy in pubs on one hand while the baby yelps and whimpers increasingly at home”.***

While the report eventually quotes a commercial sex worker and a female expert highlighting some of the challenges faced by commercial sex workers in parenting, these are quoted in a secondary role when the tone has already been set as the story is mainly judgemental in tone and gives prominence to the plight and anguish of a young man who highlights his anguish growing up as a child of a commercial sex worker. This one-dimensional report also falls short by exclusively focusing on commercial sex workers without affording their clients similar scrutiny.

- **Women as the ‘fall guy’ /person**

The current study findings also show that the media continue to stereotype women, putting them in the spotlight and depicting them as the ‘fall guy/person’ even in instances where their male counterparts are equally culpable. This is underscored by several stories. These include: “*Grandpa (64) kills self over mistress (39)*” (*The Herald* 23/10/12) compared to the *NewsDay* (27/10/12) lead, front-page story “*Mother kills three daughters*”. While the headline of “*The Herald*” report both in the headline and the story gives prominence to the claim that the grandpa killed himself over his mistress’s alleged infidelity; the report findings suggest that men do not receive similar scrutiny when the roles are reversed.



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story which zeroes in the woman's gruesome act ignores the fact domestic violence and alleged as part of the background to the killings. As a and imply blame on the part of the woman as this grandpa has been forced to take his life because of her. In contrast, the *NewsDay* report ignores the background actions of the male that are suggested to have contributed to the situation, thus from the focus of the headline the woman appears to have poisoned the children out of the blue and for no apparent reason, compared to the report that appears to suggest a reason for the man's actions.

Another headline "*Model aborts, burns foetus with lover*" (*The Herald* 26/10/12) also appears to primarily assign blame and responsibility on the woman by back grounding her lover's contribution to the alleged femicide. However, the *NewsDay* (26/10/12) report on the same issue headlined "Pair accused of abortion" demonstrates a balanced approach as it holds both the woman and man equally accountable without unfairly assigning blame on either of them.

In addition, running stories of former ZIFA CEO Henrietta Rushwaya also prominently focused on her role in the soccer scandal despite the fact that many prominent male sporting personalities are also facing similar charges.

- **Men as central characters in women's successes**

Other emerging patterns from the study also appear to portray men as central characters in women's success stories or at times appear to lend more weight to the successes of men even though the women in question are also success stories themselves. In some instances it is women themselves who are quoted deferring to men in their success stories. Examples include the story "*Hats off to Vilika*" (*NewsDay* 23/10/12). The story is based on the Sangana/Hlanganani expo and when given the media spotlight to enjoy their success Netty Khumalo their spokesperson attributes their success to the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority boss, Karikoga Kaseke, who paid for their bus fare instead of speaking about their journey to success.

In other reports, Zimbabwean ambassador to Australia Zwambila, is heard hailing President Mugabe's education policy while in another story on a leadership workshop organised for and by women, this success story appears to gain newsworthiness and credibility due to the voice of a successful male character, ZRP Commissioner Augustine Chihuri who is heard urging the women to be patriotic and ensure they vote in the upcoming elections.

- **Domestic Violence: Personal tragedy vs. context**

The findings of the 2011 Sixteen Days campaign report by the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe point to a largely holistic coverage of gender based violence. The 2011 survey by MMPZ indicates that during the campaign period, reportage is characterised by context and a human rights approach, with reports clearly identifying GBV as a societal concern, highlighting the economic and health cost and social cost at both the micro and macro level. Reportage during the campaign also highlights the various forms of GBV as well as its national and global prevalence as well as support systems and deficiencies in these and alternative sources of support.



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ys media analysis points to lack of context and  
nce and other forms of gender based violence.  
monitored media mainly presented domestic  
as an individual, personal tragedy, rather than  
a widespread human rights violation and societal concern.

This was mainly through reportage of incidents in isolation without any follow-up or attempts to link these to the wider context of domestic violence and human rights approach. Examples of such reports include, *“Dad rapes teenage daughters”* (*The Herald* 23/10/12); *“Hubby plucks out wife’s eye”* (*NewsDay* 28/1/13); *“Unrepentant wife basher jailed”* (*NewsDay* 26/10/13); *“Jealous ex-husband kills wife, child”* (*The Herald* 25/1/13);

- **Name it for what it is**

The report *“Jealous ex-husband kills wife, child”* (*The Herald* 25/1/13) further illustrates other issues of concern.

By exclusively identifying the killing as ‘murder’ the report fails to link this occurrence to the wider societal problem of domestic violence, as it is not specifically identified as such. Furthermore, by characterising the perpetrators as a ‘jealous ex-husband’ in the headline, the report perpetuates the stereotype of a certain type of man with an identified trait (jealous) that would be likely to commit domestic violence in contrast to the implied ‘normal’ calm man who would not be likely to commit such a gruesome act. By implication, the use of the phrase ‘jealous ex-husband’ also implies a justification or reason or motive for the killing.

However, in real life gender based violence cuts across all classes of people and there are no groups of people that can be characterised as being more pre-disposed to violence than other classes. In addition, gender based violence and murder can never be justified for any excuse, be it jealous or otherwise.

The report also brings to the fore other issues of concern in the way media are covering issues to do with domestic violence especially fatal ones which result in homicide. Often, reports reviewed lacked background information on patterns of abuse and controlling behaviour in the relationship. This information is important as it can arm readers with insight that such fatal violence can be predictable based on the pattern of abusive behaviour, and therefore that preventive action can be taken. This kind of reportage becomes empowering rather than disempowering. This kind of reportage also goes further to highlight remedies and sources of support and serves as a catalyst for taking action.

- **Obscuring violence and abuse**

The study also highlights a propensity by the media to obscure gender-based violence especially in cases where the victim goes on to commit murder or suicide. This is evidenced by the *NewsDay* (29/13) report *“Rape suspect murders victim’s father, kills self”*. While the primary event is the sexual abuse of a young girl, this becomes a secondary concern in the report whose main focus is the murder of the

side. The story appears to normalise this child overlooking how this child has been violated to the community has been left shell-shocked by

The *NewsDay* (27/10/13) headline *“Woman accused of poisoning three daughters”* also underscores this point. The report prominently focuses on the alleged poisoning of three children by their mother. The *“domestic dispute”* between the woman and her husband *“over his alleged marital affairs”* is passively mentioned as the trigger to the events and relegated to the background as the story focuses on the alleged poisoning.

- **Revictimising the ‘victims’**

The aforementioned report *“Rape suspect murders victim’s father, kills self”* also highlights the few instances in which the media fail to protect the privacy and respect the dignity of those affected by abuse and other unfortunate circumstances. Although, the report does not mention the violated child by name, it clearly identifies her parents by name, the community that she comes from and the name of the perpetrator. As a result, it makes it easy for the child to be identified and subjected to ridicule, stigma, trauma, thereby revictimising her. .

- **Silencing of ‘victims’ and survivors**

When it comes to stories of gender-based violence, the study findings show that the narrative is one-dimensional, mainly accessing the perpetrators and abusers rather than the victims and survivors. Almost all the stories on gender based violence and abuse highlighted the perpetrator’s perspective. Examples include the following reports: In the story *“Jealous ex-husband kills’ wife, child”*, the accused is quoted as having argued that he had no reason to *“feel jealous about an older woman he had ditched”*.

Another story, *“HIV positive rapist sentenced to 18years in jail”* *NewsDay*, (31/3), , the perpetrator Kusotera is reported as having told the court that he was recently diagnosed with HIV/AIDS and sending him to prison *“would compromise his health”*.

While this one dimensional in perspectives is mainly influenced by reliance on court reports, the media could ensure diversity and balance in the perspectives highlighted by making follow-up reports, by asking survivors if they are willing to talk and including the voices of witnesses as well. This could be achieved not just through news story writing but in expanded news analysis and feature writing.

- **The missing stories and perspectives**

In terms of covering gender-based violence, the study shows a limited spectrum of stories, mainly negative and disempowering. The reportage is event-driven, thereby exclusively portraying women as victims. Stories of prevention and survival on gender based violence that would prove more empowering for readers are missing. Neither are the stories situated within a human rights context or placed within the broader context of domestic violence. Information on remedies and psychosocial support is missing. The effect is that domestic violence is presented as an isolated, personal tragedy rather than a human rights issue and a societal concern.

In spite of the shortfalls identified, there are however, are signs of progress as well in the media's coverage of gender equality and women's rights. The most prominent ones are discussed below:

- **A rights-based approach:**

This is highlighted in stories with a human-rights based approach to the coverage of women. An example is the NewsDay (26/10/12) report 'Prisoners too have rights' in which the media is seen bringing attention to the plight of female prisoners who are said to lack sanitary wear, proper clothing and food. The report clearly identifies these as human rights issues and argues that the situation ***"deserves serious interrogation by both the nation and civic groups as it brings to the fore untold suffering by inmates in the country's correctional institutions"***.

- **Women as nation builders**

Another positive approach to the representation of women is seen in stories highlighting women's capacities in contributing to economic development and nation building processes. These include: The Herald (29/10/12) report 'CDF can empower women' which highlights how women can benefit from the Constituency Development Fund and implementing community based projects. Women are portrayed as pro-active agents in the developmental process, rather than helpless and passive recipients of aid. The Herald (26/10/12) report 'Let's co-exist and tolerate each other: First Lady' also draws attention to the role of women in peace and conflict resolution processes. The report is based on statements by First Lady Grace Mugabe, which was read on her behalf by Women, Gender and Community Development Minister Olivia Muchena, recognising Zimbabwean women's contribution to peace and stability in the country through their prayers. This was at an event to mark World Prayer Day Silver Jubilee Celebrations in Harare.

- **Challenging stereotypes and celebrating the unsung woman.**

The media also carried stories that clearly challenged factors perpetuating the discrimination of women like traditional practices. An example is The Herald (26/10/12) story 'Inheritance of women should be outlawed' The report compellingly argues that: ***"Despite the social nods it gets, wife inheritance is a serious form of violence against women and girls that has largely gone unnoticed, despite calls by human rights organisations and the government to stop the practice forthwith"***.

The report also notes that the practice mostly affects rural women who are disadvantaged because of their socio-economic status and highlights how the custom contributes to the spread of HIV/AIDS.

However, the article, which is based on International Day of Rural Women commemorations, prominently emphasises how ***"speaker after speaker lauded the contribution that women in rural areas continue to make in improving the livelihood of their families and the generality of the populace within their respective areas"***.

## and giving women a voice

Some reports also publicised the discrimination faced by women despite the gains made to promote gender equity in the workplace. These include a report carried by both the *NewsDay* (25/10/12) and *The Herald* (26/10/12) dailies publicising survey results indicating that Zimbabwean women are underpaid compared to their male counterparts. The *NewsDay* report proffers a positive example of media giving space to women to articulate themselves as the report quotes the voices of three women in differing roles such as salary survey consultant, gender and communication specialist and an independent gender development consultant.

### **A holistic approach to gender-based violence**

Although to a limited extent, the media during the period under review did show signs towards a holistic coverage of gender-based violence.

### **CONCLUSION**

As reflected in the section on strengths identified, there are definite signs of progress in the media's coverage of women's rights and gender equality.

However, the quantity of coverage, spread of topics, lack of depth and context in reportage and lack of gender dimensions in most coverage suggests that the media continue to treat the 16 Days Campaign Against Gender Based Violence as a once-off event commemorated once a year rather than a sustained effort to change minds and attitudes towards women and girls for the achievement of gender equality.

The study clearly demonstrates the ghettoisation of gender and women's as a stand-alone issue in day to day coverage of what are considered to be mainstream activities like business, politics, and to the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence traditionally held between November 25 and December 10 each year.

### **Recommendations:**

In light of these findings, the study therefore recommends that:

- The media should take the 16 Days Campaign against gender based violence as an ongoing and sustained effort to raise awareness and respect for gender equality and women's rights rather than a once-off event commemorated annually
- The media should devote more space to the coverage of gender equality and concerns specific to women as these continue to receive low priority
- The media to adopt a gender-mainstreamed approach where the implications of every decision and development in every sphere be it politics, economic, business etc are analysed in terms of their particular and differing impacts on women and men



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success stories of women and positive  
were mostly heard in arts and entertainment  
victims of various misfortunes

- The media to take a human-rights based and holistic approach to coverage of gender based violence
- Related to the previous point, the media should devote more space to news features and analysis pieces rather than mainly relying on event reports and court
- The media should be supported in every possible way so that there is adequate research and understanding of gender equality and women's rights and space allocated for reporting findings in detail.

Ends//

Report compiled by Faith Ndlovu and Chido Valerie Sibalo on behalf of  
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