



PO Box 1560, Parklands, 2121 • Tel +2711 788 1278 • Fax +2711 788 1289
mmpinfo@mediamonitoring.org.za • <http://www.mediamonitoring.org.za>
Monitoring the media since 1993

Media and the 16 Days Campaign 2006

A brief review of media coverage of the 16 Days Campaign
of No violence against Women and Children

November 2007

Written by George Kalu and Sandra Roberts



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1. Executive Summary

The coverage of The 16 Days Campaign in Gauteng media coverage, including e-tv and SABC 3 prime time news, was reasonable good in most aspects. Some improvements could be made in terms of reporting on woman and child abuse.

The 2006 monitoring revealed:

- There were more male sources (60%) than female sources (40%) in the items that were monitored;
- SABC 3 had the highest ratio of female to male sources with 60% sources being female. The *Weekender*, on the other hand, lacked any female sources in stories that related to the Campaign and woman and child abuse;
- At 17% each, the most common roles for sources was that of "Government officials and politicians" and "Civil Society";
- Where the sex of the journalist was known, 62% of the times the stories were written by female journalists;
- Topics that related to gender-based violence accounted for 36% of all stories monitored. Child abuse stories accounted for 16% of all the stories;
- 16 Days Campaign or campaigns relating gender issues accounted for 13% of the stories;
- The most supported journalistic ethic was "Woman and child abuse are fundamental human rights violations". The most violated principle was "Minimise harm";
- 3% of stories made a link between HIV/Aids and woman and child abuse
- 56% of all stories monitored mentioned the 16 Days Campaign



2. Introduction

The 16 Days of Activism: No Violence against Women and Children Campaign is supported by the South African government, civil society, non-governmental organisations, big businesses and the media. The Campaign runs in parallel to the international 16 Days of Activism: No Violence against Women, which is endorsed by the United Nations. Both Campaigns run annually between 25 November (International Day of No Violence Against Women) and 10 December (International Human Rights Day). The 16 Days of Activism Campaign aims to address violence against women and children in all forms, not only the extreme instances of physical or sexual violence, but also other less common forms of abuse such as emotional, psychological and economic abuse.

Since 1993, the MMP has undertaken numerous research projects into the representation of gender-based violence, woman and child abuse. As a result of these monitoring projects, the MMP has often critiqued the media for the manner in which such issues tend to be represented:

- Previous MMP research has shown that gender-based violence and violence against women and children is often represented within the media in a simplistic and event-based fashion;
- Coverage tends to reinforce the victimisation that the women and children have already experienced during the instance of abuse; and
- Previous research has also shown that gender-based violence and woman and child abuse receives significantly more media coverage during the annual 16 Days of Activism Campaign, with a sharp decline in coverage once the period is over.

This year for 16 Day's MMP's activities involved monitoring Gauteng media and prime-time bulletins on SABC 3 and e-tv. In addition to monitoring the South African media during the Campaign period, the MMP's other activities for the 16 Days of Activism Campaign included:

- Issuing of a series of press-releases related to the campaign;
- Participating in media interviews and live radio debates in Ukhozi FM, Umhlobo Wenene FM and SAfm;
- Holding a Mobiles and Minors Radio Conference on SAfm¹, to highlight the potential pitfall of mobile phones, especially related to child abuse.

The media were monitored on a daily basis for a range of issues and information, as detailed under Research Design below. The MMP was also regularly accessed for comment by the media on a number of issues surrounding the Campaign, including discussions of the preliminary MMP research findings and also presented findings via interviews.

¹ Available on www.mediamonitoring.org.za



3. Research Design

3.1 Rationale

The function of the 16 Days Campaign is to raise awareness about woman and child abuse and advocate for change. Since this Campaign is about women, and to benefit women, it could be expected that women would feature prominently as sources in stories, the stories would not promote stereotypes and that stories would be in line with human rights standards. It is clear from previous research, that this is not always the case, and that the same assumptions that generally inform the media, also inform the coverage around 16 Days. It is for this reason that this project sought to see if there was any change this year for the period.

Media monitoring as a research technique is able to track changes in a number of indicators. For this reason, media monitoring projects typically take place on more than one occasion. This project constitutes a follow-up to research that took place in 1998, 2004, and 2005 for sixteen days. It also forms useful comparative data to research to other monitoring from different parts of the country and different countries around the world. It also can be compared with projects that take place outside of the 16 Days period, to determine to what extent gender and children abuse are mainstreamed into general media coverage.

3.2 Method

The research technique employed was media monitoring. Media monitoring is a form of content analysis where certain qualitative and quantitative data is extracted manually by monitors. This allows data to be broken up into smaller bits of information and compared. For this research, the range of criteria extracted included the topic, origin and sources of the item and various human rights indicators and ethical principles. The information from 259 items monitored was captured into the Media Monitoring Made Easy Gender software², which enabled easy access to quantifiable data.

The media were monitored over a twenty five-day period, from 19 November – four days before the launch of the Campaign – until 13 December- four days after the Campaign ended. 14 different media were selected to reflect diversity across daily and weekly print media in Gauteng and television media. The media monitored also represented both commercial and public service media.

For the print media, each monitor monitored one daily newspaper edition. Items were selected based on whether they were about child abuse, women abuse or general gender issues. In addition, all articles related to 16 Days events were monitored. Certain weekly newspapers were also monitored, including all sections and supplements in the

² This software is available free from the MMP (email mme@mediamonitoring.org.za) or online at www.mme.org.za



relevant paper excluding letters, reviews, television schedules and advertisements. For television media, the MMP monitored the primetime news bulletins on a daily basis including the weekend bulletins for e-tv (English), and SABC 3 (English).

Table 1 shows the 14 media that were monitored for their coverage of the 16 Days of Activism Campaign, gender-based violence and child abuse.

| Medium | Description |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Beeld | Daily print (Afrikaans) |
| Business Day | Daily print |
| City Press | Daily Print |
| Daily Sun | Daily Print |
| Sunday Times | Weekly print |
| Sunday Independent | Weekly print |
| The Citizen | Daily Print |
| The Star | Daily Print |
| Mail & Guardian | Weekly print |
| Sowetan | Daily Print |
| Sunday Sun | Weekly print |
| Sunday World | Weekly print |
| etv | Broadcast Prime time news |
| SABC 3 | Broadcast Prime time news |

The Media Monitoring Project is a human rights organisation; consequently, the strategy was compiled considering the following key assumptions:

- Violence against women and children is a fundamental human rights violation.
- Domestic violence, rape and femicide are often under-reported and marginalised in the media and this needs to be challenged;
- The dignity of the woman and/or the child concerned is paramount. They both have the right to be depicted as individual human beings and should not be merely reduced to the status of victims or statistics;
- Women and children have the right to privacy and confidentiality and they should be treated with respect and dignity;
- Survivors of violence have the right to have their perspective told either by themselves, if they are willing, or if they are not, by organisations that fight for the rights of abused women and children;
- Media should not have to divulge information about survivors of violence, without explicit informed consent.

3.3 Limitations





There are two limitations to the findings of the research related to selection. Firstly, due to the fact that only stories focused on child and women abuse, the findings cannot be generalised to all coverage over the period. Secondly, Gauteng print media as well as prime time (19H00) news on SABC 3 and e-tv were monitored, this means that the research is not necessarily a representative sample of the national media, although the findings are likely to be similar. Media monitoring also has some general limitations, being a largely quantitative method. These include the fact that the reasons behind the coverage are hard to decipher, for this reason, other research is explored as necessary. Additionally, it is not possible to tell from media monitoring what is not shown in the media.



4. Findings

Findings were generated by the Monitoring Made Easy: Gender software as standard results which are automatically generated, with some queries been written particularly for this research. These findings address who speaks in the stories? Who tell the stories? What were the stories about? Whether journalistic principles were observed or not. And, how much attention was provided to the Campaign.

4.1 Sources

For the purposes of this project, the MMP defined a source as any person who is directly or indirectly accessed (i.e. either directly or indirectly quoted) in the item, as well as any person who is clearly depicted in a cartoon or image.

For images, a source was any person who could be clearly identified in an image, and who was often the subject or main focus of the image. People were only coded in images when the image was coded separately from the story. In capturing the source, three pieces of information were required for each source: who is accessed, their role, and their sex.

4.1.1 Sex of sources

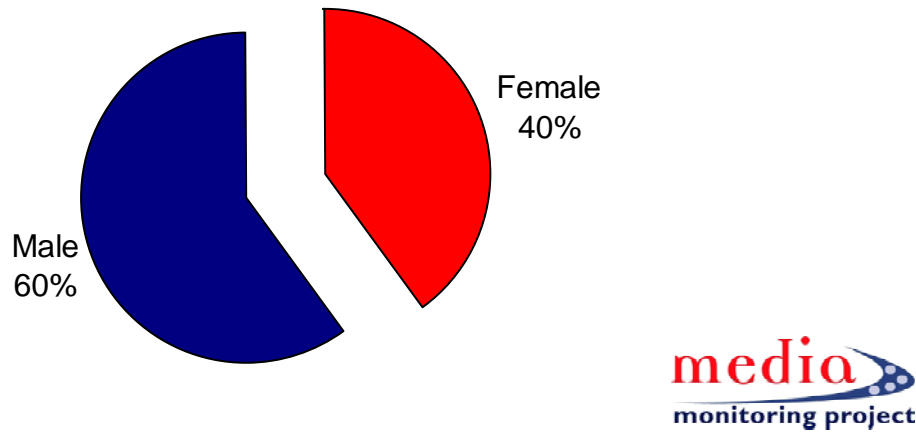
The general trend is to quote more women than previously³. However, the roles in which women are sourced in stories are also very important. If women are only accessed, for example, when they are victims of abuse, it tends to perpetrate stereotypes of women. Similarly, if women are only ever quoted in the media in reference to gender-based violence, it tends to imply that gender-based violence is a women's problem. The same is true of children, if women are always quoted about children; it tends to imply that children and child abuse are women's problems. Clearly, this is problematic as men are more commonly the perpetrators of women and children abuse.

Graph 1 presents a gender breakdown of the sources accessed in stories on gender-based violence and child abuse during the monitoring period.

³ For example, in 1999 women constituted 10% of people who spoke about election issues, in 2004 that number had increased to 23%



Graph 1: Sex breakdown of sources

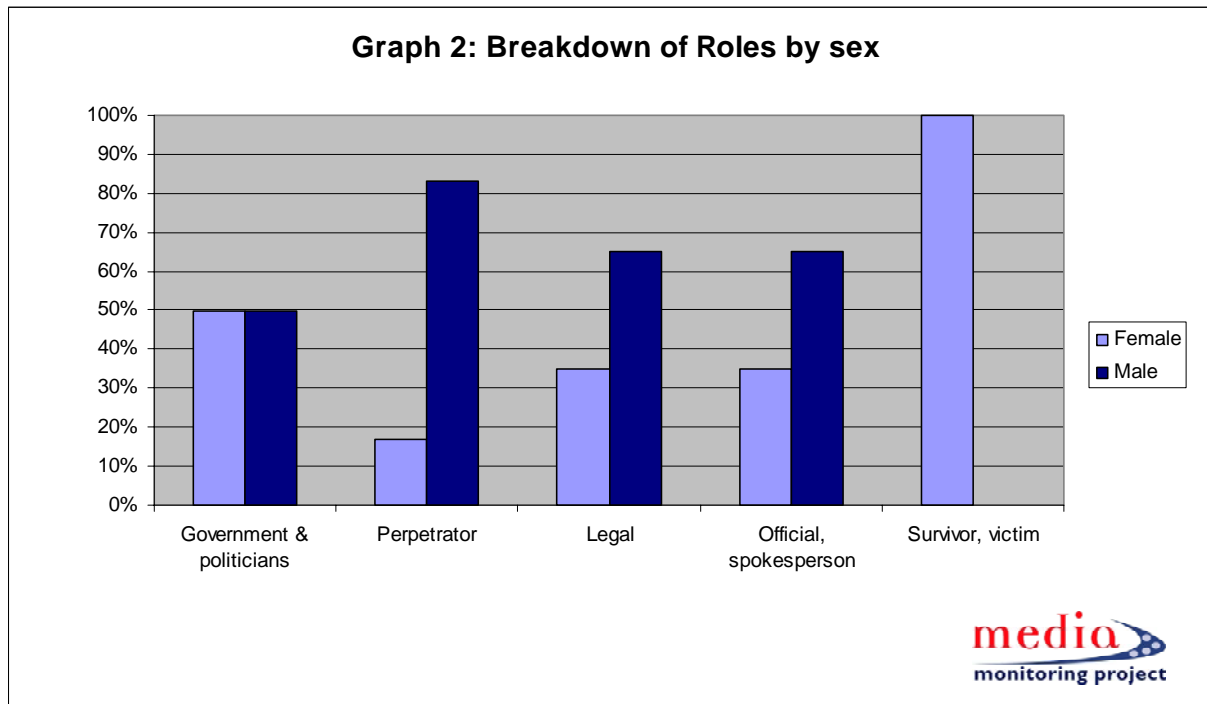


As illustrated by graph 1, in 2006, the media monitored included more male than female sources. Although the number of female sources were less than the number of male sources, these figures are still higher than at other times, considering that the global average for female sources is 21% and the South African average according to the same study is 26% according to Global Monitoring Project in 2005⁴.

This number is notably smaller than the previous years' 16 Days campaign, where women sources for the first time were higher (55%) than men sources (45%). However, the Gauteng-based media did fare poorly in comparison with media from other parts of the country in 2005 too. The reason for this drop cannot be identified through media monitoring but it is suggested that the less funding available for the Campaign for 2006 and the lack of corporate support are contributing factors. It seems that continuous work by all stakeholders – government, corporate companies and civil society is needed to ensure that women continue speak in the media on gender-based violence.

⁴ Available on www.mediamonitoring.org.za





Graph 2 above shows how women were sourced in the media, what occupation do they appear in the media. In the graph, the occupations are ordered according to how often they appeared, with source occupation groups of 20 or below excluded. The most-quoted occupation group was that of government persona or politician, at 114 people in total.

The most sourced persons were government with 52 people sourced, with a equitable number of female and male sources. The second most sourced group was perpetrator at 38, of which 83% were male. 28 lawyers, judges, courts, or advocates were quoted with the majority being male (65%), which is likely to reflect the male-dominated nature of the legal profession. Men were most sourced as officials or spokesperson, too, also with 65%. It seems that little effort was made by media to seek out other voices, with the statements by government and officials featuring prominently. In fact there are only 1.2 sources per story on the topics for the period.

It seems that women have not been mainstreamed into the media, but still tend to talk about woman and child abuse, which are perceived as “women’s issues”. Progressive feminists recognise and encourage men to speak on issues of women and child abuse, whilst having women speak about other issues such as business etc. This balance seems to be lacking in the coverage generally and is highlighted by coverage of the Campaign.

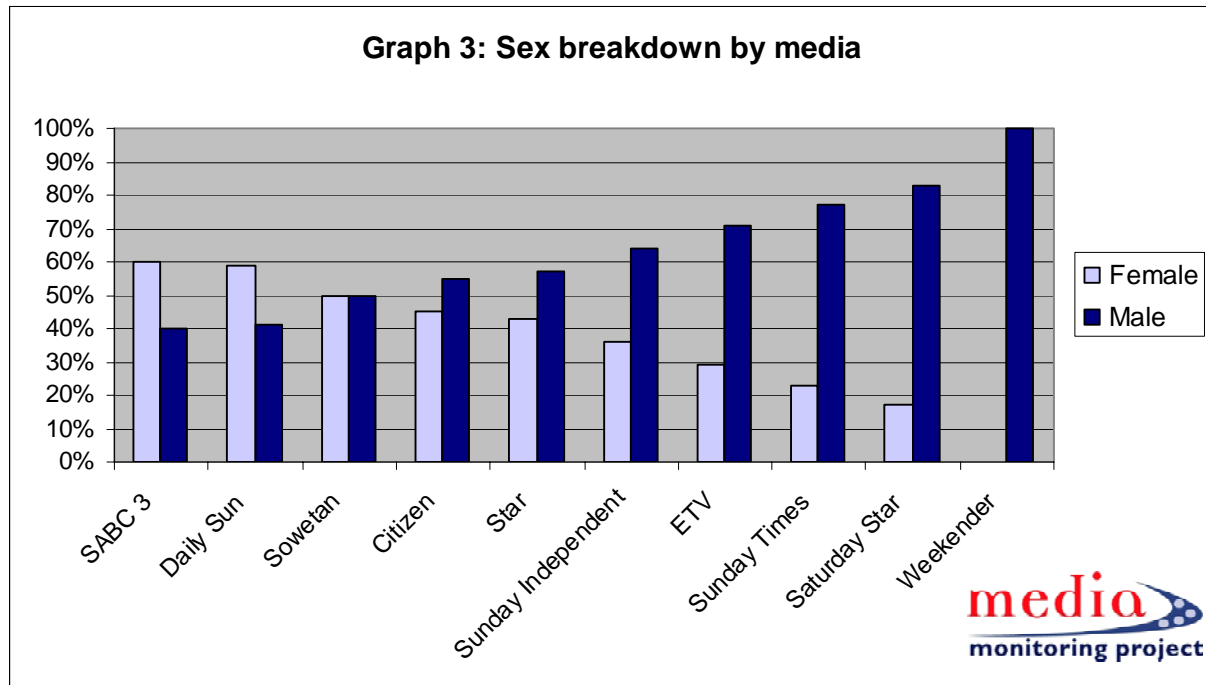
4.1.2 How do the different media fare on sex of sources?

Previous monitoring has shown that the media does not represent women in a uniform manner. Previously MMP has used a Gender Media Rating to show how this was the case. This year it is clear that there is a great variance between difference media. As mentioned



before, the presence of women as sources on women’s day does not necessarily indicate gender sensitivity, but the absence means that women have not been given the opportunity to comment on the phenomenon of abuse that affects so many women in South Africa.

Graph 3 illustrates the proportional breakdown of male and female sources across the all the individual media monitored.



On average SABC 3 accessed the highest number of female sources at 60% in proportion to the number of male sources at 40%, sourced on stories of children, women and gender. The Daily Sun and Sowetan seem to have made a good effort as well. Daily Sun accessed female sources at 59% (Male 41%) and Sowetan capturing equal number of male to female sources at 50% for each.

The Weekender, a weekly newspaper focusing on light politics and leisure, had very few stories relating to the Campaign. Hence there were no female sources accessed in stories relating to the Campaign or woman and child abuse.

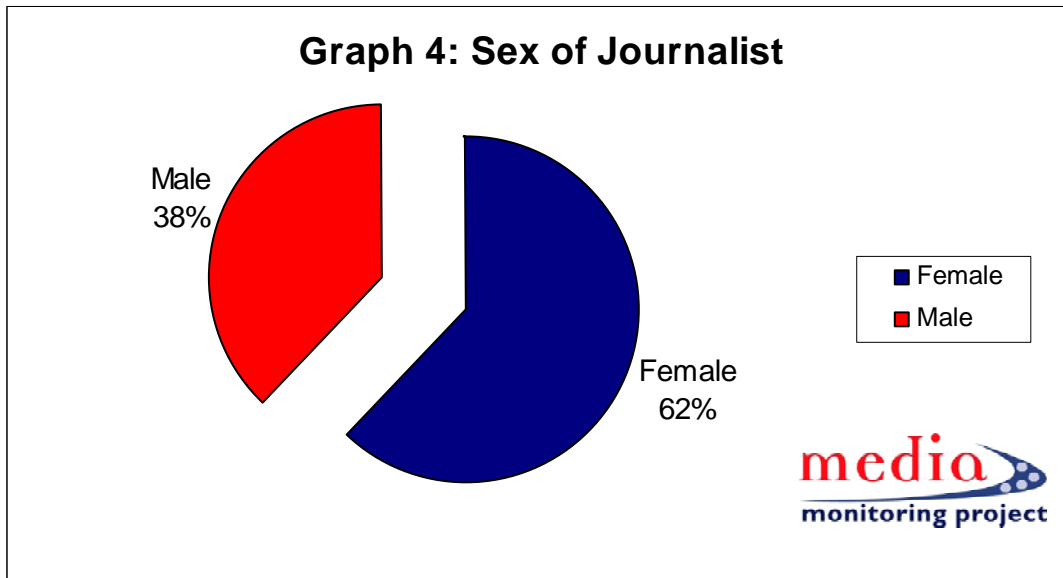
4.2 Who tells the stories?

Men still dominate the newsrooms of South Africa and around the world. The recent glass-ceiling report by SANEF points to many institutional restraints that keep women from achieving seniority in newsrooms⁵. International research shows that “Female journalists

⁵ SANEF. 2006. “The Glass Ceiling and beyond: Realities, challenges and strategies for South African media.” Accessed from



are confined to reporting on local news rather than national news and 'soft' topics such as entertainment or health rather than politics or crime."⁶ This means that coverage of gender issues may be left to women because they do not have the editorial commitment, or because there is an assumption that woman and child abuse is a women's issue, rather than a broader societal one. It is not possible to assume that women constitute a homogenous group, no more than men do. To assume that female journalists can tell the story of women from different backgrounds any better than a man could is simplistic. It also means that male staff journalists are not exposed to women and child abuse.



Graph 4 illustrates the sex breakdown of journalists responsible for stories on gender-based violence and child abuse during the monitoring period. From the graph, it is evident that more than half of all stories (62%), where the sex of the journalist or author could be identified, were written by female journalists, and 38% by their male counterparts.

The MMP's 1998 16 Days research⁷ found that male authors contributed most of the stories about rape, abuse and gender-based violence. In 1998, women comprised less than 5% of the journalists, where the sex of the journalist was clear. While the sex of the journalist writing the story does not necessarily have a significant impact on the content, it is positive that more women journalists are able to make their voices heard on these

http://www.sanef.org.za/download_files/diversity/2006_Glass_Ceiling_FINAL_Report_21_July_2006.doc on 6 November 2007.

⁶ Hermano, T. & Turley, A. 2000. "Who Makes the News?: The Global Media Monitoring Project finds great disparities in news coverage of men and women. Accessed 28 November 2007 from <http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/01-4NRwinter/78-79.pdf>

⁷ Garda, Z., Bird, E., Mthala, P., Bird, W. 1998. "Monitoring Media Coverage of Violence Against Women". In Media Mask: Journal of the Media Monitoring Project. Vol 3: No 3. Media Monitoring Project: Johannesburg.



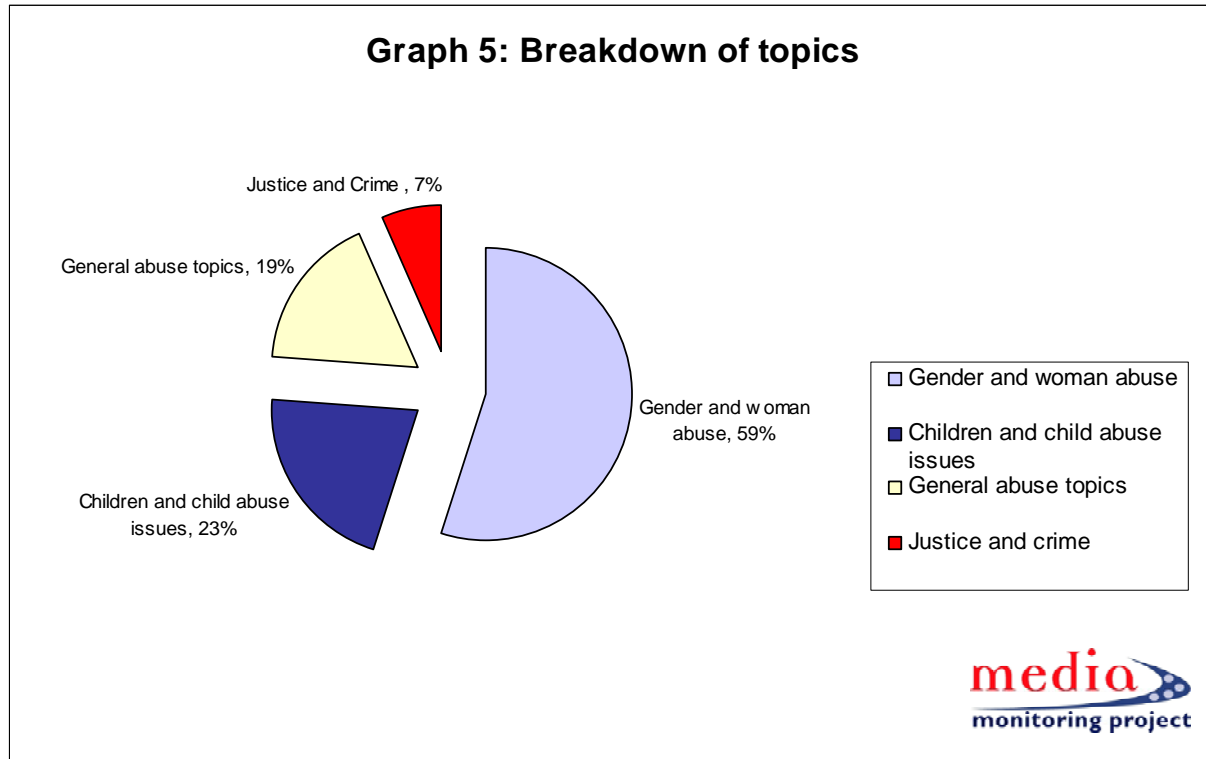
critical issues. However the Glass Ceiling report⁸, mentions that female journalists in newsrooms tend to adopt the dominant, male attitudes. It seems that it is debatable whether female journalists writing Campaign stories is, in itself, is a good thing.

⁸ SANEF. 2006. "The Glass Ceiling and beyond: Realities, challenges and strategies for South African media." Accessed from http://www.sanef.org.za/download_files/diversity/2006_Glass_Ceiling_FINAL_Report_21_July_2006.doc on 6 November 2007.



4.3 What were the stories about?

Graph 6 illustrates trends in topic coverage. The central subject or topic of the news items monitored provides some sense of what the media chose to cover during the 16 Days of Activism Campaign.



From the Graph 5 it is clear that most of the stories monitored addressed issues relating to gender and violence than any other topic for the period. Child abuse was second at 23% and general abuse topics third at 19%. There is a clear focus on abuse topics during the period, with media clearly making an effort to feature such stories. At other parts of the year, it is more likely for abuse stories to be classed as crime stories, which is clearly not the case for this period.

4.4 Journalistic ethical principles

In showing interest in abuse stories for the Campaign, MMP wished to see if the stories were told as ethically as they could have been by assessing of whether the media supported or violated key ethical principles. The principles were compiled by drawing on internationally accepted, ethical standards of journalism. The nine principles used outline clear ethical guidelines that promote respect for human rights and best media practice.

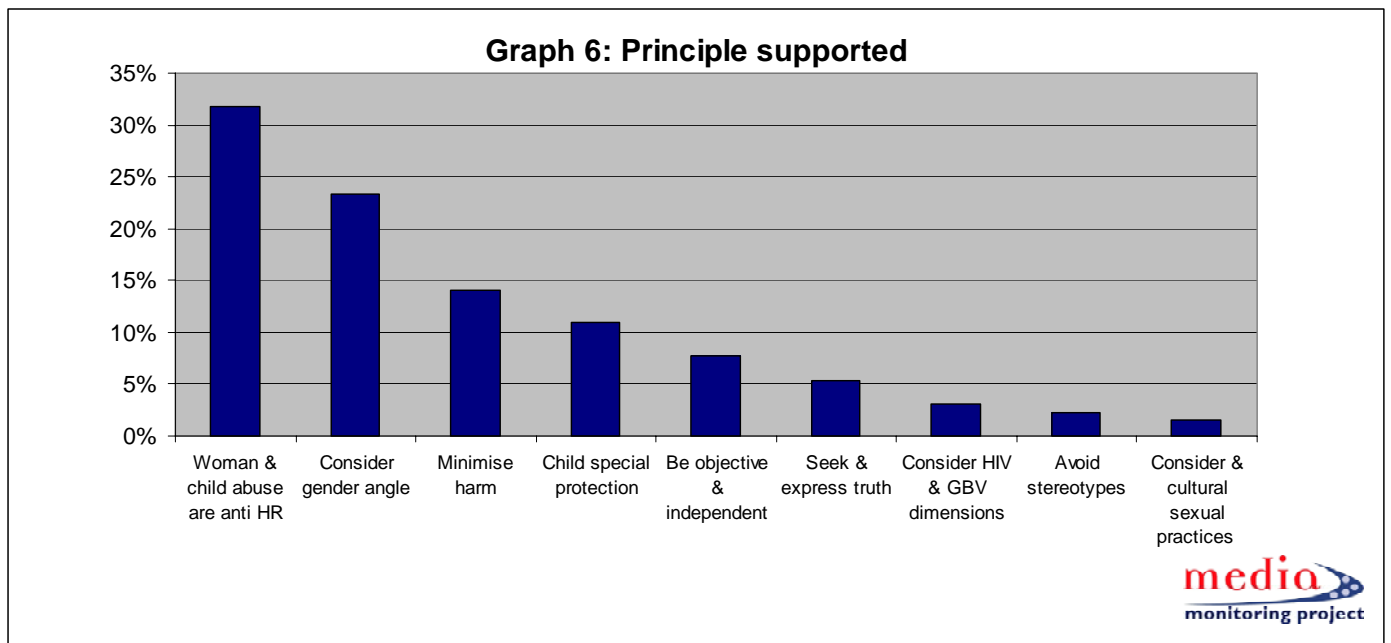
Half of the stories (50%) that were monitored supported key ethical principles, Graph 6 illustrates a breakdown of the various principles that were supported. 18% of stories



monitored violated key ethical principles, Graph 8 shows the breakdown of the key ethical principles that were violated in the stories monitored. The rest of the stories monitored, 32%, neither supported nor challenged any of the ethical principles.

4.4.1 Most observed ethical principle

Graph 6 below, shows the most supported or adhered-to principle was “Woman and Child abuse are fundamental human rights violations”, 32% of all stories that supported this ethical principles (amounting to 129 out of 259 stories) supported this particular principle. This shows that in some cases journalists made a link between woman and child abuse to human rights. The media should be encouraged to make this link especially in the efforts to raise issues of woman and child abuse during the Campaign.

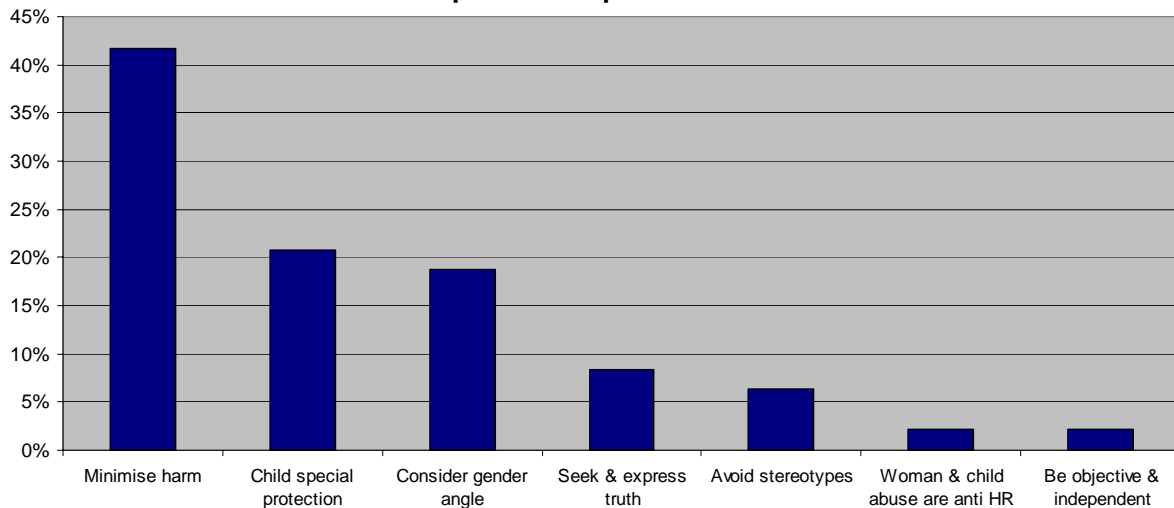


The media seldom raised the issues of HIV/Aids in the context of sexual abuse of women and children. Given the prevalence of the pandemic in South Africa, it would seem logical to link women and children abuse and HIV/Aids.

4.4.2 Most violated ethical principle

While the media’s performance overall was impressive, there are still some areas of coverage of the Campaign that could be improved. The most commonly violated ethical principle was “to minimise harm”. In other words, of the 48 out of 259 stories that violated key ethical principles 42% of that portion brought about further harm, most often by identifying “victims” of abuse or crime.

Graph 7: Principle violated



One example of how media failed to minimise harm came from the *Daily Sun* it was titled "THEY RAPED IN SA'S TOUGHEST TOWNSHIP...and they paid the price" (*Daily Sun* 20/11/2006, p3). The story was about a couple who were attacked by a two young men who repeatedly raped the 29 year-old woman in the story. The young men were caught by members of the public and beaten to death. The picture of the dead bodies was laid out on page 2 with the caption "allegedly attacked a couple with knives [and] repeatedly raped the 29 year-old woman". Another picture used in the story was of the couple, the caption read "A 33 year-old man and his 29 year-old lover in shock after their ordeal"

In this story the *Daily Sun* could have minimised harm by not using the picture of the woman and her partner because it was not in their best interest. The report made a deliberate effort not to name the "victims" but by picturing them it violated their right to dignity and privacy therefore causing further harm. At the time MMP made the argument, in a media update, that it was not clear whether informed consent was given under such traumatising circumstances. Hence one cannot prove that it was in the best interest of the couple, especially the woman, to have their photograph published in the *Daily Sun*.

4.4.3 Ethical conclusions

South African media has received much criticism from government about their ethical conduct. It would seem that by violating key ethical principles in some of the stories, they are supporting the view that media are unable to regulate themselves. What is particularly concerning is that the most violated ethical principle is the principle not to do more harm, where stories deal with women and child abuse. It would seem that the media is exposing the victims and survivors to secondary abuse and violating their right to dignity through, in many cases identifying victims of violence.

4.5 HIV/AIDS

The 16 Days of Activism Campaign occurs at a time that includes a number of important days including, beginning the campaign, International Day for the Elimination of Abuse against Women (25th November), World Aids Day on 1 December, International Day against Gender Violence on 6 December and International Human Rights Day on 10 December (the final day of the Campaign).

Spread across these other important days, the Campaign has the opportunity to highlight a number of issues relating to the spread of HIV/AIDS amongst women and children as a result of sexual violence, the effects of violence on women living with disabilities, issues of gender-based violence and the fact that women and children's rights are fundamental human rights.

Out of all the media that were monitored, only very few highlighted the link between HIV/AIDS and violence against women and children. As seen from Graph 7, of all the articles that supported ethical principles only 3% supported the principle that states "Be aware of the HIV/AIDS dimensions to gender-based violence and child abuse stories". This is the ethical principle that links gender-based violence and child abuse to HIV/Aids. Some of the media that made the link between sexual violence and HIV/AIDS include, *Sunday Times* and *Sowetan*, as the following two examples demonstrate.

"I wish I could protect my grandmother" (*Sunday Times*, 10/12/ 2006, p.8)

This was an opinion piece appeared on the weekly column "Everyone Knows Someone" written by a 13 year-old girls sharing her experience of how her Grandmother's HIV/AIDS status changed her life. Her grandmother had been molested as a child and was also raped as an adult, which resulted to her being HIV positive.

This young girl expresses her desire to always protect her grandmother from depression. It is amazing how she moved by her grandmother into social action. With the help of her friends, she decided to start visiting children who are HIV positive, extending care and friendship.

Accompanying this article is a four point brief discussion by Lisa Vetten and Kailash Bhana, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation about how violence spreads HIV. The main points are;

- Coercive sex, like rape, is risky especially for women;
- In abusive relationships it is difficult for women to negotiate condom use;
- Research indicates that women who have been sexually abuse as children are more likely to engage in high risk sexual conduct (like having multiple partners);
- Women who know their HIV status or who are perceived to be HIV positive may be at risk of violence from their partners or members of their community.



"Gender virus: To fight HIV-Aids, fight violence against women. (*Sowetan*, 27/11/2006, p.28)

This article explains a direct link between violence against woman and the spreads of HIV/Aids. The author explains that violence against a woman compromises and in most cases dines her of the choice to have safe sex

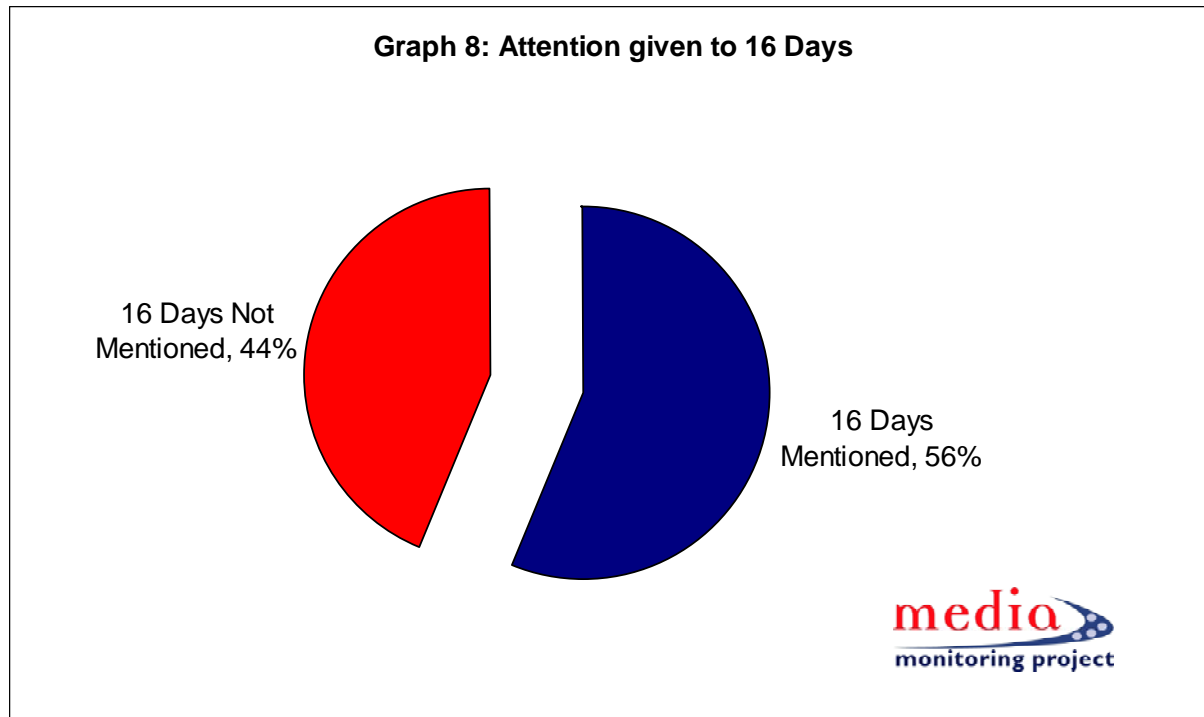
"many women are scared to say no to sex or insist their partner use a condom; they are not able to talk about abstinence, using condoms, and don't know if their partner is doping risky things" (*Sowetan*, 27/11/2006, p.28)

The *Sowetan* and the *Sunday Times* are to be commended for making the link between these two areas of social concern and for raising awareness of the need to consider HIV in instances of sexual abuse.



4.6 Attention provided to the Campaign

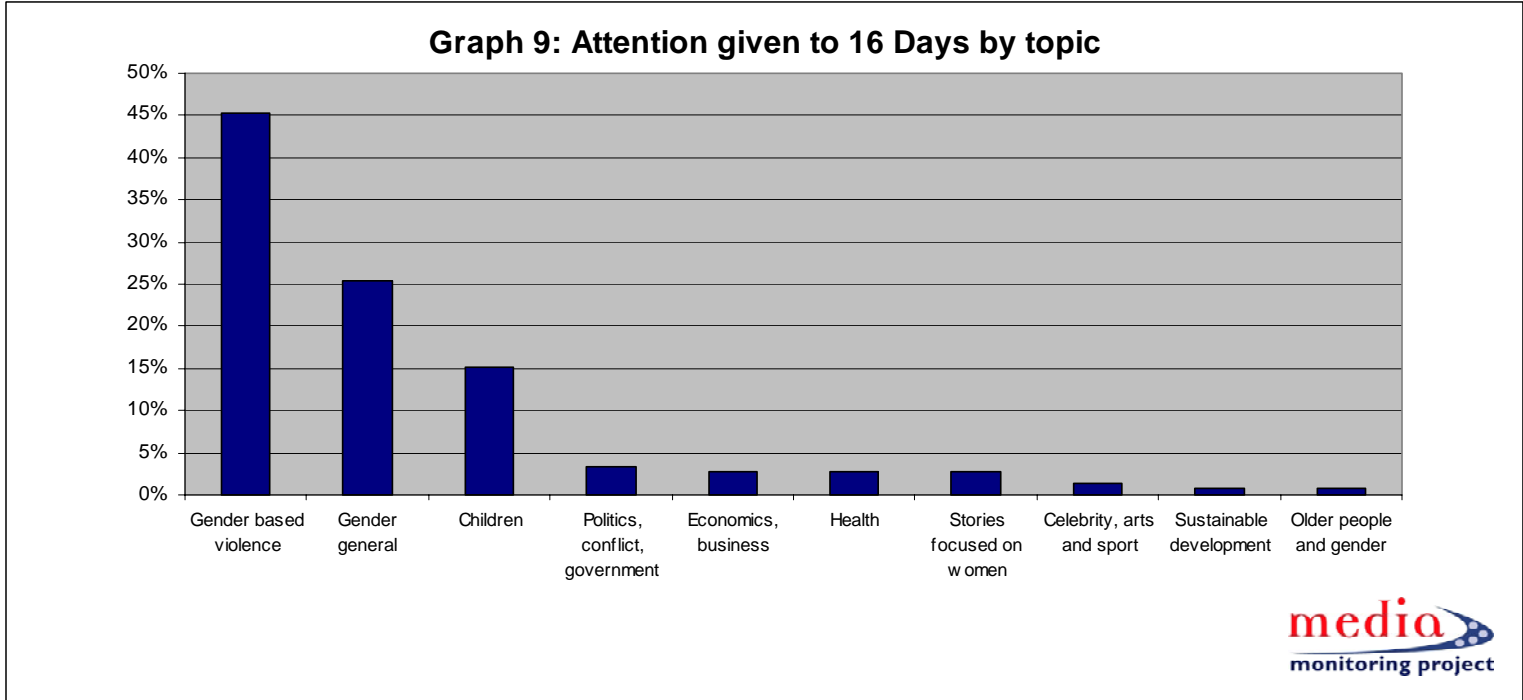
Graph 8 provides a breakdown of the proportion of stories in MMP's 2006 research that were either explicitly about the 16 Days of Activism Campaign or which mentioned the Campaign in the course of reporting on gender-based violence and child abuse.



It is encouraging to see that most articles that were monitored acknowledged the Campaign. 56% of the articles monitored mentioned the 16 Days Campaign, this figure is the highest observed in a 16 Days monitoring project since 2004 as shown in Table 1 on page 4 of this report.

4.6.1. Attention afforded to the Campaign according to topic

Graph 9 shows the breakdown of stories that acknowledged the 16 Days Campaign according to topics.



It is clear from Graph 10 that most of the stories that acknowledge the Campaign dealt directly with issues affecting women and children.

It is also encouraging to see that the media made an effort to view the Campaign more broadly by occasionally making a link between the Campaign and other topics shown in the graph.

5. Now and then: a comparison with previous 16 Days results

Table 1 below compares some of the monitoring results from 2004 and 2005 to the 2006 monitoring conducted during the 16 Days Campaign. It is important to note that the 2004-2005 monitoring projects were conducted on media across various provinces in South Africa, where as the 2006 monitoring was mainly limited to Gauteng print media and prime time news on e-tv and SABC 3. Bearing this in mind, the number are not directly comparable.

| Topic | Categories | 2004 | 2005 | MMP SA Average 2004-2005 | 2006 Results |
|----------------------|---------------------------|------|------|--------------------------|--------------|
| Sex of sources | Female | 46% | 55% | 50% | 40% |
| | Male | 54% | 45% | 50% | 60% |
| Sex of Journalist | Female | 55% | 59% | 57% | 62% |
| | Male | 45% | 41% | 43% | 38% |
| Topics | Gender Based Violence | 20% | 33% | 17% | 59% |
| | Child abuse | 20% | 21% | 20% | 23% |
| | Advocacy/Gender Campaigns | 5% | 15% | 10% | N/A |
| Attention to 16 Days | Mention of 16 Days | N/A | 23% | N/A | 56% |
| | 16 Days not Mentioned | N/A | 77% | N/A | 44% |

Comparing the monitoring from 2004 and 2005 in 2006;

- The percentage of female sources is lower by 10% as compared to MMP SA average 2004-2005;
- There was more focus on stories about women abuse than child abuse;
- There was a higher proportion of female journalists reporting on issues of woman and child abuse;
- There was significantly more attention given to the 16 Days Campaign in the media monitored in 2006.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of the 16 Days research are mixed. The percentage of women sourced is a good thing, however, women still continue to be sourced in limited capacities. The number of female sources is also clearly down from the same period in 2005. Reduced funding for the 16 Days campaign may well have something to do with this. More female journalists told women and children abuse stories than previously, but this does not necessarily point to gender equitable newsrooms. However, there does seem a recognition that gender based violence constitutes a human rights violation in many of the stories, although stories are not always told in such a way as to minimise harm. It is concerning to not, also how the link between gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS is not being made by the media.



In our efforts at improving future coverage, the MMP would like to provide the following recommendations:

- There is a greater awareness by the media of the need to observe key ethical principles. The 2006 monitoring found uneven patterns of support for the principles devised by the Southern African Editors Forum (SAEF). Fair, balanced, coherent, in depth, educative and informative coverage that recognises and contributes towards the enhancing of human rights;
- Continuing to identify people as “survivors” of abuse, rather than “victims” of abuse. This was one of the weaknesses in the media in 2004. There was slight improvement in 2005 and in 2006 the media seems to be sensitive towards identifying people as survivors rather than victims.
- Encouraging survivors of violence to write or tell their own stories;
- Continuing to access more women in the media;
- Having meaningful participation of children in the Campaign where their ideas are heard and their views are incorporated in mainstream news;
- Having diverse coverage of the different types of abuse, not only the most extreme forms;
- Continuous and regular media coverage of gender-based violence and woman and child abuse throughout the year and the need to end such violence.

In general, there is a need for a greater awareness of the various Campaign-related initiatives and for the continued development and expansion of positive partnerships between government, media, and civil society.

Appendix 1: Profile of the Media Monitoring Project

The MMP is a human rights driven, non-governmental organisation specialising in media monitoring with the goal of advancing a media culture, in SA and the rest of the continent, that is critical and fair, free, diverse and ethical.

Because the media has the power to shape people's social, historical and political perceptions of the world, it needs monitoring. This is what MMP has done everyday since 1993, assessing media's performance against a human rights framework and other local and international media.

a. Mission

The MMP aims to promote the development of a free, fair, ethical and critical media culture in South Africa and the rest of the continent.

b. Objectives

The core objectives of the organisation are as follows:

- To be the pre-eminent media "watchdog" in Africa;
- To inform and engage media professionals and other key stakeholders to improve the quality and ethics of reporting in Africa;
- To influence the development of robust and effective communication legislation and media codes of conduct in Africa;
- To develop long term strategic partnerships with key organisations.

c. Activities

The MMP offers a wide range of services to civil society organisations (CSOs), media, government and NGOs in South Africa and other African countries, including:

- Reviewing and analysing the content, selection process and presentation of news reporting to monitor the quality and ethical practices of broadcast, print and online media;
- Distributing regular reports on research findings and highlighting infringements to media duties and responsibilities;
- Conducting in-depth research on specific issues (commissioned reports);
- Developing training materials, tools and best practices on ethical and fair media reporting;
- Submitting proposals and other material for the development or amendment of policies and laws.



The MMP is the leading independent organisation in South Africa that monitors the representation of a broad range of human rights issues in the media. It is also the only organisation that conducts in-depth qualitative and comparative studies in this field. The MMP's expertise is widely acknowledged by media stakeholders, and the MMP is regularly invited to provide comments and presentations on a wide range of subjects within the media.

Monitoring methodology and database specialists

The MMP has worked with a large number of CSOs including CIVICUS (an international coalition of NGOs), the Perinatal HIV Research Unit (PHRU), the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR), the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) and Gender Links. For each of these organisations the MMP was responsible for developing a monitoring methodology, a specialised database and generating quantitative results.

Human Rights Monitoring Experience

The MMP has wide-ranging expertise and experience in the field of human rights media monitoring. Since its establishment in 1993 the MMP has conducted research and analysis on gender, race, xenophobia, children and people living with disabilities, HIV/AIDS and representations of Africa, as well as other aspects of discrimination. The MMP also monitored the South African press for issues of poverty. As a result, the MMP's core competence is the monitoring of media coverage of a wide range of human rights issues.

In 2005 the MMP undertook a monitoring project to assess the quantity and quality of the coverage of African countries in the South African media, across a broad range of the print and broadcast media. Building on well-established monitoring methodologies developed in the course of the numerous research projects successfully completed since 1993, the attention given to Africa was assessed for the degree of discrimination involved in the reporting, the subject matter of the stories concerned and the countries that predominated in the Africa sections of the major South African media.

