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Monitoring the media since 1993

50 years of Women's Voices: Monitoring National Women's Day 2006

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In this report:

Women's Day 2006 was the 50th anniversary of the women's pass march. As a result, much of the media coverage discussed this history and the women who participated.

MMP identified various trends in print media coverage of Women's Day:

- ✓ What stories were covered for Women's Day;
- ✓ Do women tell their own stories?
- ✓ The stories of heroines, leaders and activists;
- ✓ How was gender-based violence covered?
- ✓ Successful women;
- ✓ The Magogos;
- ✓ Women with disabilities; and
- ✓ Women's Day print advertising.

1. Introduction

Considering the South African government aim for 50/50 gender representation in every sector in South Africa, Women's Day 2006 provided a platform to the media to try and implement the call from the government. The year also marked the 50th anniversary of the 1956 Women's Day march.

As part of the Media Monitoring Project's (MMP) ongoing efforts for more gender-equitable representation in the South African media, the Women's Day monitoring project aimed to assess the accomplishments of the media in reporting on the issues around women and gender equality. The 9th of August is the day women of South Africa fought for their voice to be heard against racial and gender oppression. In the past 50 years, the challenges for women have not changed, with women still faced with the struggle for gender equality in the workplace and the continued fight against gender-based violence. Women's Day offers a platform from which the fight against human rights violations against women could be challenged.

This year offered particular opportunities for media to educate all South African's of the historical role which women played in challenging Apartheid, particularly in regards to the pass march. However, most coverage continued to be very much event based, focussing on Women's Day celebrations. In particular, a Johannesburg tabloid showed no improvement, representing women almost uniformly as victims.

2. Method

In implementing the monitoring project, the project utilised software called Monitoring Made Easy: Gender (MMEG), produced by the Media Monitoring Project (MMP). This software has an embedded database and methodology. As a result, this research is therefore comparable to any research produced using this software in other parts of the world.

Codes for the various sources used were customised for this project, based on people who are likely to be sourced. Monitors were trained in a consistent manner, ensuring similarity of output.

Newspaper and radio media were coherently, thoroughly and consistently monitored and analysed on a daily basis for a 12 day period, from 1st to 13th August, surrounding National Women's Day on the 9th August 2006, to ascertain patterns and trends during the period of Women's Month.

In this analysis, the MMP monitored Print and Television broadcasts. For print the main news sections and supplements in the following 12 daily and weekly Gauteng based newspapers:

- Beeld;
- Business Day;
- City Press;
- Daily Sun;
- Mail & Guardian;
- Saturday Star,
- Sowetan;
- Sunday Independent;
- Sunday Times; and
- Sunday World.
- The Citizen;
- The Star;

For television, the seven o'clock news bulletins were monitored on two channels - SABC 3, a public service broadcaster and the free to air television channel, e-tv. In the monitoring, only stories that dealt with women and Women's Day were monitored, meaning that women had to be subject of the story or be affected by the story.

The information gathered during the monitoring was then captured onto the MMEG monitoring form, and then entered into a database. The database was designed to store the captured monitoring information and permitted the running of specific queries and the production of results.

The media monitored were scrutinised for the following aspects:

- **Item number:** Each item was numbered in relation to where it occurred in a bulletin or in the newspaper;
- **Summary:** A brief summary of each item was captured;
- **Sources:** A breakdown of the type, gender, function in the story and occupation of the sources utilised in the media monitored;
- **Topics:** The most frequently accessed topics, or central subject of each item was captured using a set list to ensure accuracy and reliability;
- **Journalists:** A breakdown of the journalists who compile the items;
- **Origin:** Where the story originates from;
- **Ethical principles:** Principles challenged or perpetuated;
- **Gender Central:** Whether the core of a story is about gender; and
- **Issues:** The issues that are discussed in the item.

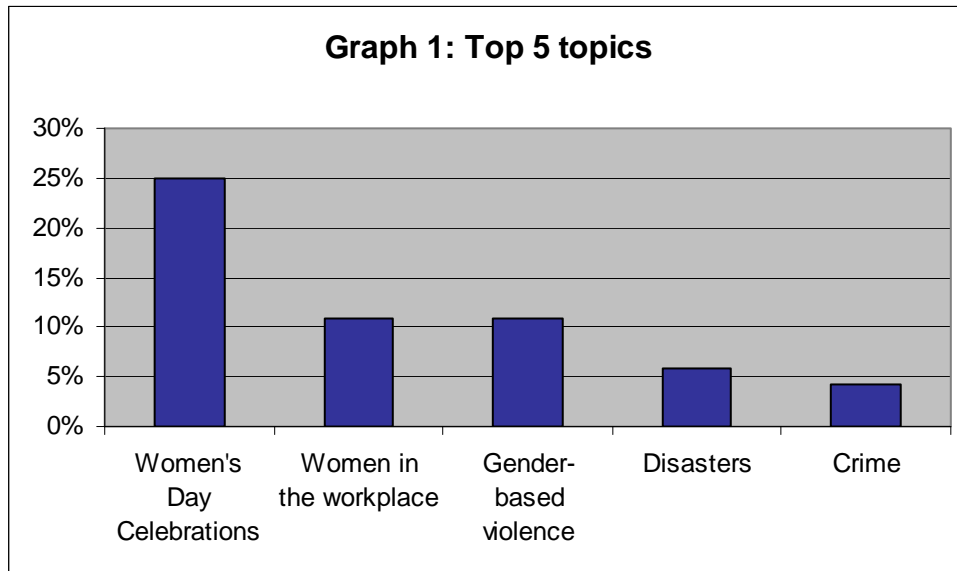
2.1. Limitations

Limited financial and human resources necessitated that only media easily available in Gauteng were scrutinised, thereby limiting the monitoring sample to the 14 media presented above. In addition, due to the scarcity of relevant articles in the business sections of the majority of newspapers monitored, these sections were not monitored. The results therefore reflect the trends and patterns observable in the main sections of the respective newspapers, as well as the television news bulletins. The results are also limited to news programming on television and did not take into account other coverage provided to Women's Day on the public service and free to air broadcasters. Radio was also not monitored.

3. Women in the media

3.1. Topics of Stories

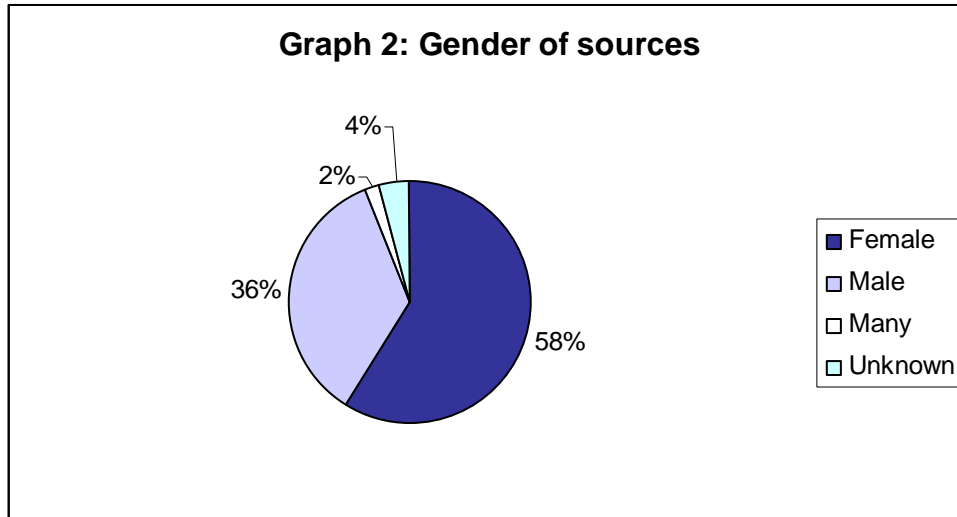
Stories were considered relevant if they pertained to gender or Women's Day, rather than the news as a whole.



As seen in Graph 1, some topics in the monitored period received more publicity than others. Women's Day celebrations were covered in 25% of the monitored stories, 11% of the items were about gender-based violence. Women in the workplace (general), ironically were covered in 11% of the stories as well. Gender campaigns were covered in 8% of the stories, and disasters in 6% of the stories.

3.2. Gender of Sources

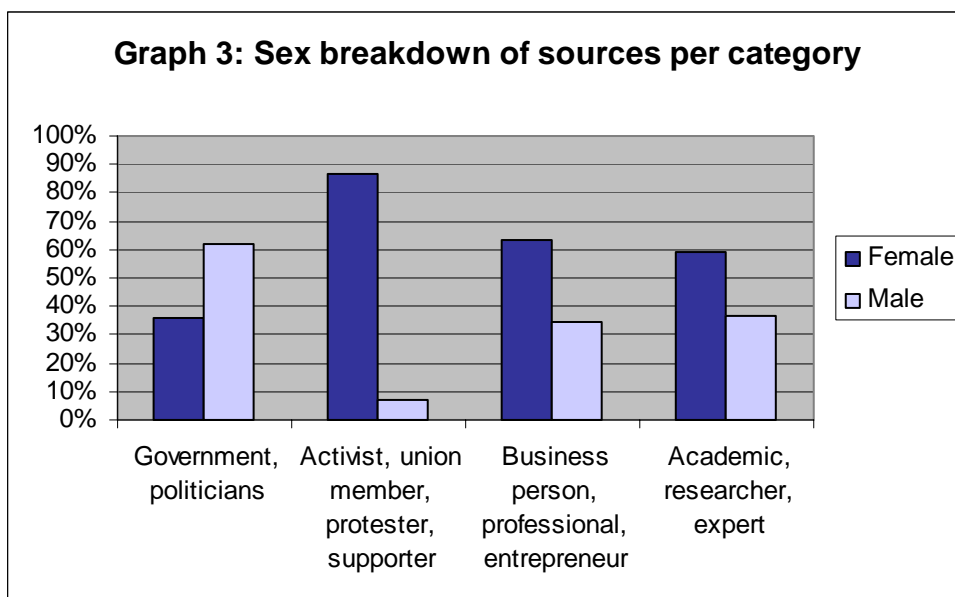
In this report, a source has been defined as a person or organisation quoted in the story or item, whether directly or indirectly.



As shown in Graph 2, female sources speaking on gender or Women’s Day issues made up 58 % and male sources 36% of the sources respectively. This is a significant difference of 22%. Groups of sources accounted for 2%. The high proportion of female sources is primarily because of the selection of stories having to relate to gender and/or Women’s Day. It is likely, that the figure of women speaking in all stories is closer to the number in the Local Government Elections of 2006, which were held 5 months earlier, women make up 27% of the total¹.

Through ascertaining the gender of sources used, the MMP was able to identify which occupational categories had little or more representation of women, as well as the extent to which the media sought out and utilised the female representatives that do exist.

¹ www.mediamonitoring.org.za
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The most prominent sources, were from government or politicians (61 people), followed by Activist, union member, protester or supporter, then business person, professional, or entrepreneur, and finally Academic researcher or expert (22 people).

The government had a low figure of female sources. This is despite of the event-based nature of coverage which saw many female government ministers' and MEC's appearing at events. The number of men in government sourced was almost double the number of women who were sourced, with women only managing 36% and men 62%.

The sex of activists, union members, protesters, and supporters were 86% of the sources were female, 7% male and 7% were unknown. This was expected as the media gave women a chance to speak. Many activists were quoted, who spoke out against the abuse of women and for support for the survivors.

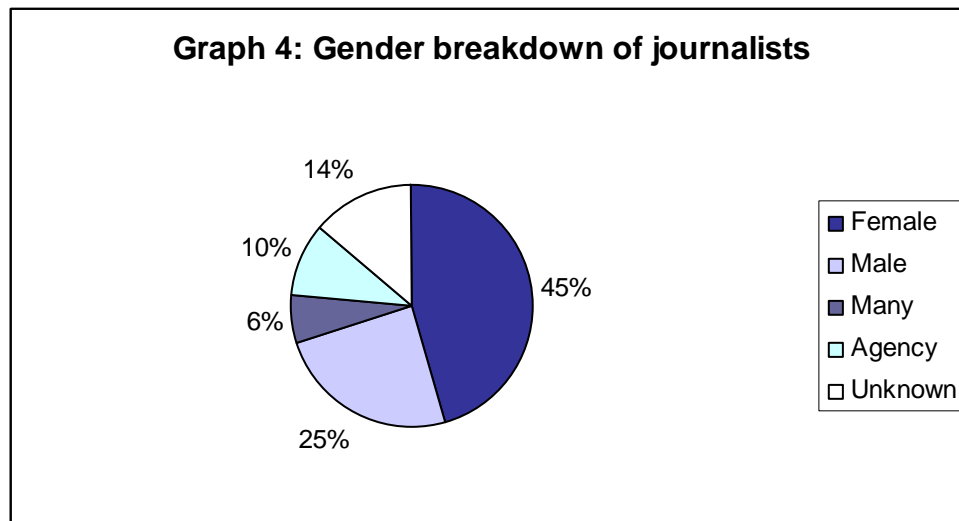
Business and academia, in contrast, had a majority of women as sources. The business and academic sectors, however, sourced respectively 32% males and 65% females and 36% for males and 59% for females.

The number of victims sourced directly or indirectly was few, numbering 10 in total. Of this 7 were female victims/survivors, and 2 were men². The

² The gender of the other victim/survivor is unknown, but is likely to be female.
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disproportional representation women receive, has to be interpreted very cautiously, as only items pertaining to women were monitored.

3.3. Gender of Journalists



The gender breakdown of journalists in the monitored period (Graph 4) showed an improvement in the number of female journalists compared to the 2001 report. In the media this year, female journalists reported 45% of the monitored items, male journalists accounted for 25%, agencies for 10%. In 14% of the cases uncertainty existed about the gender of the journalist, and in 6% of the cases the item was done by multiple journalists.

It is important to note that only stories relating directly to Women's Day or gender issues were monitored, as opposed to general stories. This accounts for the high number of female journalists, which covered stories 65% of the time that we know of the gender of the sources, as opposed to 35% which were covered by men. In relative terms (male vs. female journalists) the number of female journalists is up from 47% to 66% since the 2001³

High numbers of women reporting on women's day and gender-related stories is not necessarily constitute a good trend as having women report on "women's issues" simply reflects editorial bias. It also may be taken to mean that low priority was given to these stories, which seem to be predominantly event-based. And women still tend to be the more junior journalists in

³ <http://www.mediamonitoring.org.za/Portals/0/womensdayrep2001.pdf>
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Women's Day monitoring period.

newsrooms⁴.

In *Diskriminasie leef, bevind navorsing oor vroue in media (Discrimination still exists in the media, according to study)*, *Beeld* (08/08/06, p. 15) reports on a SANEF study, which found that senior female journalists are still on the receiving end of discrimination. The report mentions that discriminatory practices which exist in the media, make it impossible for women to fulfil their potential as journalists.

3.4. Highlighting Heroines

The history surrounding Women's Day received good publicity, as some media took time to look at a diversity of women who were present in the demonstration of 1956, but who previously not had their stories told in the media. Through the publication of these stories, media consumers heard of many heroines, including those in places outside of the "big cities" like Johannesburg and Cape Town. The media covered other areas where the women who also participated in the march 50 years ago had to travel for more than a day to reach the Union Buildings in Pretoria, like the story by *The Star* (09/08/06, p. 11) with a headline *Women's historical march relived* about Lillian Diedericks, one of only two Eastern Cape veterans from the 1956 march who is still alive. At the time she took a two-day train trip to Pretoria to meet Prime Minister J. G. Strydom.

The publicity highlighted participation of many other women who marched and organised the pass protest 50 years ago. This created the opportunity for these women a chance to voice their opinions about the current state of the country and the challenges still faced by women after 12 years of democracy. The publicity also showed that not only men were involved in the struggle of fighting for democracy. This coverage also served as a history lesson by informing the nation of unknown heroines. The *Sunday Independent* (06/08/06, p. 9) had a story with the headline *We burnt our blood fighting for freedom, says struggle veteran*. This story looked at Alzina Zondi, a woman who was involved in the 1956 march, "the only surviving woman from a group of KwaZulu Natal who participated in this historical march". The story looked at her life in the past and the present, as well as her views on the democratically elected government and the party of which she is a member - the ANC.

⁴ SANEF Glass Ceiling report available
www.sanef.org.za/download_files/diversity/2006_Glass_Ceiling_FINAL_Report_21_July_2006.doc

The Citizen (09/08/06, p. 12) had a story about Sophia Williams-De Bruyn who was one of the leaders in the historical 1956 women's march. Like most of the veterans, she is concerned with the current state of developments in South Africa related to women and child abuse. Williams-De Bruyn says: "today, I'm not happy with what is happening". "This is not what we struggled for - raping of babies, rampant poverty, and so many ugly things".

Beeld (10/08/06, p4) provided coverage of a group of women who had participated in the march of 1956, in *Ek kan nie glo ek loop weer die pad (I cannot believe that I am walking this road again)*, in order to listen to the speech of the deputy president. Laurette Ngcobo one of the main speakers at the 1956 Women's march maintained in the *Sowetan* (10/08/2006, p. 4) "rural women suffered the most. They had to take care of children on their own when the men had left for the cities..."

This extensive publicity was probably assisted by the range of events organised and hosted by the government across the country. From the beginning of August, a number of events were held across all the South African provinces, attended by prominent female politicians.

3.5. Voices of the leaders and activists

The media performed admirably in getting the views of women who were involved in organising the march 50 years ago. The public was educated about those women who now hold influential positions and whose involvement in the historic 1956 women's march was until recently unknown. With such women coming from a variety of age and racial backgrounds, the media did not focus only on black women. Women in politics and public organisations were also given a chance to present their views through opinion pieces in the print media.

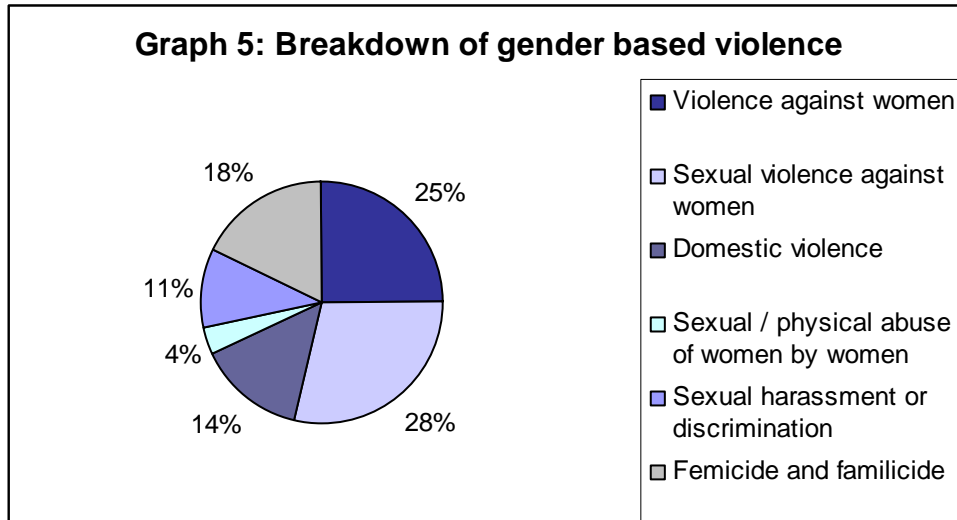
Examples here would include commentary pieces by:

- The Deputy Minister of Environment Affairs and Tourism, Rejoice Mabudafhasi (*The Citizen*, 9th of August, p. 9);
- The Commissioner of the National Youth Commission, Vuyiswa Tulelo (*Sowetan*, 1st of August, p. 13);
- The premier of the North-West Province, Edna Molewa (*Sowetan*, 2nd of August, p. 13); and
- One in Nine activist Carrie Shelver (*Sunday Times*, 6th of August, p. 39).

These articles did not only raise serious issues but also gave people who do not usually appear in the media a chance to be known by the public. It also provided the opportunity for the work of companies or organisations to be presented in terms of who they are, what they do and how the public could benefit from them or vice versa.

3.6. Gender-based violence

The topic of Gender-based violence accounted for 11% of all the stories monitored. The topic broke down as follows: violence against women accounted for 25% of these stories. Sexual violence against women for 29%, followed by femicide and familicide for 18%, domestic violence for 14%, sexual harassment or discrimination for 11%⁵.



The items that were monitored showed diversity in terms of categories covered that were about women, but the representation of women as victims were given greater prominence as stories on gender-based violence were more likely to appear on the first 4 pages. An example is provided by the *Daily Sun*, (08/08/06, p. 4), under the headline *He claims he loves her then he raped her!* Advice stories were more likely to appear on the last pages just before sport in some and after sports in other newspapers. In most case the victims of crime were black women. The *Daily Sun* published, in comparison with other news media, disproportionately more stories gender-based violence stories than other mediums.

The monitoring has also confirmed the trend of the media to use images that represent women as victims, women who look as if they have been crying and women who have been physically abused. The use of these images invades the privacy of the women when they are vulnerable. The continued utilisation of such images also represents women as people who are weak and at mercy of men. Such representation was for example apparent in the story on the front

⁵ Considering the small sample of gender-based violence stories, these figures are to be interpreted with caution.

page of the *Daily Sun* on the 8th of August with a headline *DAD, BRING BACK MY LOBOLA!* This item included a full colour picture of a woman crying. The *Daily Sun* (10/08/06, p. 5) had a further item *Hacked for nothing* with a picture of a woman in a hospital bed bruised in the face with a cast on her arm.

Ironically, during Women's Month, when news media are supposed to promote the empowerment of women, images of women as victims or as sex objects were more numerous than those showing women in comfortable positions.

The *City Press* (13/08/06, p. 31), with a headline *Halt abuse by applying for a protection order*, gave advice on the issue of obtaining a protection order. This included information from "who may apply for it" to "what can be done when a perpetrator ignores an order". Such an article is welcome as it informs women of how to obtain protection orders, so they can get out of abusive situations.

3.6. Successful Women

There was extensive attention provided to women who are successful in what they do and have accomplished by themselves, such as buying property, cars and expensive furniture and supporting their families without the help of men. Such a story was published in the *City Press* (13/08/06, p. 6) under the headline *More women buying property*.

The government also took advantage of the month to highlight what it claims it has done for women in the employment sector, from domestic workers to company CEOs. The stories of urban high profile women received greater attention than peri-urban and rural women of stature. An example of one of the women in the city who received attention was Wendy Luhambe who has been appointed as the new chancellor of University of Johannesburg, published by *The Sunday Independent* (06/08/06, p. 9), *The Star* (01/08/06, p. 2) and *Sowetan* (01/08/06, p. 7).

3.7. Women in Sport

Women in sport were given some publicity, but it did not compare to the sports dominated by men, which continued to receive more coverage, for example soccer and rugby. The coverage given to sports, such as weight lifting by women showed the other side of sport in South Africa which we do not usually see, as weight lifting in general is not given much exposure by the media. The fact that the woman involved in this sport is not based in Johannesburg, which is the centre for most news in South Africa, shows the media made a good effort to find female athletes.

The *Umsobomvu Youth magazine*, an insert in the *Sowetan* remarked *Sisters in sport are doing it for themselves* August, 2006 p.9). *The Star* (09/08/06, p. 18) also made an effort by profiling some of the successful women in South African sport in golf, soccer, cricket, rugby and many more. While the media seem to be trying to include more women in sport, they failed to get the views of women on

the issue of the new Bafana Bafana coach, giving the impression that national soccer issues only affect men.

With the lack of success in South Africa's national sports - cricket, rugby and soccer - in the monitored period, the lack of coverage on the Women's national soccer team Banyana Banyana beating Malawi 7-0, was particularly surprising. As the only team raising the national flag in sport high and making the nation proud, and within the context of women's month, this performance should have received greater coverage. On the positive side, however, profiles were noted on women behind the scene in soccer, such as Ntambi Ravele in an article included in the *City Press* on the 6th of August (p.19) *Women in sport doing fantastic job* and Anastacia Tsihlias, in the *Lady's goal to keep soccer flame burning* (*City Press*, 13/08/06, p.19).

3.8. Women in Business

Women in business were given publicity by having their stories published in supplements and in the main section of the newspaper, but not receive much coverage in the business sections of the monitored newspapers which were excluded from monitoring.

This can be seen as having both positive and negative aspects and consequences. It is positive because the media noticed the need to give coverage to these women who are doing great jobs, during women's month, while negatively questions need to be asked over what will happen once women's month has ended. It has to be seen whether other women will be contacted to present their achievements as women in male dominated fields, or whether the media will repeat the patterns of previous years, where women disappear from the public eye, only to re-emerge in August 2007.

With respect to discussions surrounding careers, the media did provide some advice to women on the opportunities available and on the career paths for young women who have not yet decided on their future. The articles in supplement newspapers had a quite a number of opportunities listed, as was apparent in the *Umsobomvu Youth magazine* and other special features by newspapers that were specifically issued for women's month. Articles highlighting women who are doing jobs that are perceived as being "men's work" also showed that women should not limit their choices. There were for example stories about women who are farmers, builders or sport journalists, as shown in the picture story in the *City Press* on the 6th of August (p. 9) with a headline *Getting down and dirty*, and in a story about women in Information Technology careers in the *Sowetan* on the 8th of August (p. 15). The first story is about two

women who are fixing the road near Jabulani Flats. Stories like these emphasised that opportunities were still available for other women to join these fields.

Ironically, research conducted by the South African National Editors' Forum's (Sanef) showed that female journalists are still not treated well in the industry and that there is little room for advancement for female journalists⁶. This story was covered in both the *Mail and Guardian* and the *Beeld*.

3.9. The Magogos

Stories were also noted that were about female senior citizens- "abogogo"- receiving houses, those who wished to have a house of their own before they die and those who have been pleased to see all the changes that have happened in this country - the really old **magogo's**. This coverage on older persons not only serves as a form of education to younger people as they shared their views and wisdom, but it showed us South Africa in the eyes of the "mature".

The views by the women on how they have managed to stay alive for a long time were not too different, and in fact seemed to be largely shared by most, if not all of the older persons accessed. Katriena Heyman a 110 years "young woman", in an article in the *Star* on the 09/08/06 (p. 3) answered "[h]ard work, the grace of God and the regular use of snuff". Another positive story was run by the *Daily Sun*, (08/08/06, p. 29), with the headline *Run gogo, run!* This item was about a fun run meant to encourage women to break the silence against abuse, with participants being female older persons. This story shows the courage that senior citizens have inside themselves.

Large corporations also used the attention given to women by the media to make themselves look good in the community, by sponsoring the *magogo's* who do charity work, including taking care of children and those who were suffering because of lack of resources. This is evident in the story by *The Citizen* (10/08/06, p. 8) of "*ugogo*" uEdith Morake, aged 80, who received a donation for the children's home she is running, using her pension of a little over R400 a month and a few community donations, Morake takes care of 45 abused, abandoned and orphaned children. The issue of a *magogo* taking care of grandchildren was not dealt with, with coverage on this topic only evident when there is a story about the magogo who has been involved in positive or negative incidents or events.

⁶ SANEF Glass Ceiling report available www.sanef.org.za/download_files/diversity/2006_Glass_Ceiling_FINAL_Report_21_July_2006.doc

Older persons and pensions received little coverage, although it is one of the more serious issues affecting older persons. In many instances, older persons use their pension money to feed large households. However, there have been a numbers of recent developments where older persons have either had their government pension stopped or are not receiving their pensions for certain reasons, although they are supposed to be receiving them. Pension issues accounted for only 1% of the monitored stories.

Most stories that were about older persons who were not directly involved in the march of 1956, focused on the issue that they either did not have any houses or inadequate housing, with such older persons being represented mainly as victims in such items. Such representation was apparent in *Fire eats up gogo*, which was carried by the *Daily Sun* (03/08/06, p. 3). There was however, a positive story by the *Daily Sun* on 10th of August (p.4) in the SUNHOUSES sections, which was titled: *Gogo (82) gets her own house*.

3.10. Young Women

Young women are represented as the leaders of tomorrow in an article by the *Sunday World* (06/08/06, p. 23) with a headline *SA Babes with attitude*, which refers to them as the "feminista". According to the article, the woman "is opinionated and self-assured, she can finish her beer (but it will probably be a Peroni) at parties as easily as she would hold her own arguing the economic importance of the 2010 World Cup soccer for South Africa".

There were not many stories about young people. There may be two causes. Either young people did not do anything about Women's Day or the media did not cover the events that were about young people and Women's Day.

3.11. Women with Disabilities

Issues of disability were not given any coverage, in similar vein to previous MMP research. Generally the media only give focus to disabled people, regardless of gender, when there is an event for or about them, when members of the disabled community have achieved something notable, or been on the receiving end of discriminatory or violent behaviour. In the period surrounding Women's Day not much was done to empower or highlight disabled women.

4. Representation of Women's Day in Print Advertising

Whilst it is important to show women in adverts, as in the media more broadly, women are often stereotypically represented in advertising. This is generally true

of media coverage, but the trend is particularly acute in advertising. Visual adverts are particularly bad as women's bodies are often commodified⁷.

In the monitoring we looked at adverts from companies and government that had something to do with Women's Day whether by praising women, wishing them luck or just recognising the day.

Some big corporations showed their support for the aims and objectives of Women's Month by saluting and praising the women of South Africa in their advertisements. Some of these advertisements were not about the company's services or business operations, but were mostly about the women who have played a major role in the company.

An example of this is provided by an advert for the South Africa Breweries limited (SAB), which maintained: "with eight BScs, four MScs, a Ph.D and dozens of other industry qualifications, our women brewers have their place at the heart of our business. In fact, of SAB's 65 brewers countrywide, 23 are women, as are 10 of our 13 current trainees. Not only does this group of exceptional women excel in their field, but their passion, skills and teamwork are simply inspirational." These words accompany the picture of women of different races and ages. In this advert there is no image of any of the products sold by SAB.

The government also did not miss out on the opportunity to highlight some of its achievements in its different departments. The Department of Public Works showed a range of its achievements in all of its departments in its *Women and public works* advertisement. Women in prominent positions in careers that have been mainly dominated by men also received attention in advertisement, such as those for "*women in property*" and those from the Department of Science and technology in its "*Women in science*" adverts.

This is in contrast to 2005 when there were adverts that continued to send negative stereotypes about women, such as the Levi Strauss clothing label advertisement, featured in *The Citizen* (09/08/2005, p. 7), which depicted a model in jeans and a bra. The model's face was hidden, which dehumanised her and placed her in the role of an object on display for her body. During 2005, the Department of Arts and Culture advertisement, featured in the *Sowetan* (08/08/2005, p. 8), as well as in the *Mail & Guardian* (05/08/2005) pictured three smartly dressed women grinding corn in a field. The advertisement slogan proclaimed: "For all the other times when you give so unstintingly we would like

⁷ Greater analysis of the 2006 Women's Day print advertising is available <http://www.mediamonitoring.org.za/Gallery/tabid/58/Default.aspx>

you to take time out on this day". The slogan appeared to provide support for the long and often thankless hours that women work. At the same time, the advertisement reinforced stereotypes about how women should always look good/attractive/pretty. The slogan for the second page of the advertisement, which shows the women no longer grinding corn states: "This Women's Day we celebrate the contribution of South African Women to our lives". This slogan, along with the fact that the women are shown engaged in domestic work, effectively locates women in the domestic rather than public sphere. This is reiterated with the use of the words "our lives" rather than "our country" or "society".

In comparison with the two examples presented above and other negative examples from 2005 in the same period, the 2006 campaign coverage has shown a positive improvement in terms of advertisements in the local media. However, this probably has more to do with the 50th anniversary of the pass march than a new approach to advertising for women's day.

5. Conclusion

In the analysis the MMP noticed some strength in the way the media reported on women day heroines. In print media, the number of female journalists was almost twice as many as the number of male journalists. The 2006 Women's Day was also the 50th anniversary of the 1956 women's march to Pretoria and the print media highlighted some of the heroines who were involved in the march, and who did not receive media publicity before. This was positive, not only because it showed the ability of the media to research but also the stories about these heroines served as a lesson to both young and old. They also gave a fresh angle to the historical march.

The manner in which women are represented in the media shows that there is still a lot to be done towards gender equality in the media, for women both as journalists and as newsmakers.

The supplements that were inserted in newspapers showed that there is some improvement, most notably an increase in the number of women in high positions. These supplements also drew attention to women's organisations that are not always given publicity by the media, such as the Businesswomen's Association.

The media did an adequate job in covering issues of women in the workplace and in business, although they only focused on women in the cities. The media did also make a major contribution in tackling serious issues. However, a great deal still needs to be done in improving the manner in which the print media represent women who are victims of crime, abuse or bad service delivery, with specific application to black women. It is critical for the media not to be seen to be taking advantage of women's pain or stress, to elicit pity rather than sympathy.

While it is agreed that the media should continue to report on issues affecting women, it is imperative that they guard against violating women's dignity and respect in doing so. Overall, it can be concluded that the media have made a number of positive improvements in the manner in which it has covered Women's Day compared to 2001.