

Reporting poverty in Zimbabwe

A media monitoring report by Media Monitors



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About Media Monitors

Media Monitors is a Zimbabwean NGO that conducts media monitoring and analyses trends in the Zimbabwean media. Media Monitors vision is of a quality media that works in the public interest; supporting an informed and engaged citizen.



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Executive Summary

Poverty is pervasive in Zimbabwe, with close to 70 percent of the population living in poverty. This report shows however that less than two percent of news reporting in the country is dedicated to poverty reports.

Media Monitors assessed trends in reporting poverty in Zimbabwe, with a view to contribute to improved professional, and responsive reporting that makes a positive contribution to national policies on poverty. Media Monitors worked on the presumption that journalism can play a role in advocating for social reform, through analytical, investigative stories that hold those in power to account. Nineteen local media outlets were monitored for 30 consecutive days from 1 – 30 April 2016. These included 11 print publications, seven radio stations and one television station.

In reporting poverty, the results showed similar trends across print, radio, and television and across private and publicly owned outlets. In all cases, results of the study show the under-reporting of poverty, with the highest percentage of poverty reports not exceeding six percent of total news content. The lack of food was the most dominant topic on poverty, with various reports focusing on the drought, lack of food, and various appeals and donations to drought-stricken areas.

The majority of the stories written on poverty were generic and focused on national issues with statements from government officials dominating. Stories focusing on specific localities were recorded in 51 percent of cases, with 22 percent on local urban areas, 21 percent on rural and 8 percent on peri-urban areas. There was therefore an under-representation of stories that looked at the issues affecting those most affected by poverty, the people.

The typical news source on poverty is predominantly, male, upper class with a position in government, which meant that few voices were heard from women in general and poor men. The report reinforced the findings of other reports that show that women are under-represented in news media. In poverty reports, women's voices were heard in only 22 percent of all stories. Considering that women constitute more than half the national population and deal with the grind of poverty on a day-to-day basis, it is ironical that their voices continue to be under-represented in topical national debates. When poor people were quoted, it was mostly as passive victims of poverty waiting for government or donor agencies to save them. By concentrating their coverage on the activities of the upper and middle classes, the local media presents an elitist public sphere where poor people do not contribute their thoughts.

From the issues that were monitored, it is difficult to determine the state of poverty in the country, as there was a predominance of policy statements that rarely went beyond the headline. The main challenge that was observed in the manner in which the issue of poverty was covered is that one could not determine “cause and effect” from the local media’s coverage since there was no discernable link between issues affecting the nation, as stated in the headline as a whole and developments occurring at local level. In some instances, issues affecting one particular community were covered in isolation without linking one issue to the other; this deprives the media’s audiences of a comprehensive analysis of the issues.

In their watchdog role, the media are expected to interpret reality for their audience in order for them to get a clearer picture of the situation on the ground. This was rarely the case in poverty related news with only 19 percent of the monitored reports making reference to poverty related policies and laws. Without much reference to policy, journalists have no basis to compel policy makers into action. If members of the public are not aware of what their leaders are supposed to do for them, they cannot hold them accountable for their actions or lack thereof.

The orientation of Zimbabwe’s media, which showed a distinct pro and anti government stance sometimes watered down critique of government’s interventions to alleviate poverty or its hand in exacerbating the situation. The state-controlled media outlets mainly cited policies to highlight government’s efforts to fight poverty whilst privately owned media outlets made references to gaps in the government’s efforts. As a result, the media’s audiences were exposed to half-baked news that did not bring out the full story that was explored.

Poverty is a cross cutting issue that is connected to almost every subject covered by the news media, it is therefore imperative for editors to prioritise poverty reporting so that it is reflected in most of their coverage. This would help give a clearer view of the state of affairs in the country, which will contribute to the crafting of interventions to alleviate poverty.

1.0 Chapter One: Introduction

Two thirds of Zimbabweans live in poverty, and yet reporting on poverty by Zimbabwe's news media is less than two percent. When the media do report on poverty, there appears to be no clear focus on the pressing issues, ranging from policy analysis to evaluation of impact of programmes on the ground. In addition, reporting is fragmented and rarely goes beyond the headline.

This report assesses the role of Zimbabwe's news media in reporting poverty. The report concludes that although poverty remains one of the country's most pressing challenges, there is inadequate coverage of the issue. The main aim of the report is to provide evidence that can improve poverty reporting and to advocate for pro-poor policies. Through monitoring the media and production of this analytical report on reporting poverty, MMPZ hopes to enhance the media's capacity to report critically on poverty; focusing on issues that affect the worst marginalized groups that include people living in rural areas, people with disabilities, youth and women among others.

Poverty has been defined as “Not having an income or consumption sufficient to support specific normative functioning. It is generally defined as a state of being poor”,¹ and includes, “lack of access to productive resources, physical goods and services and income resulting in individual and/ or group deprivation, vulnerability and powerlessness.”²

The study showed that poverty as a subject of the news received very low coverage, with less than two percent (1.98 percent) of all reports focusing on poverty in the 19 news outlets monitored during the one-month period.

1.1 Country context

Zimbabwe has a total population of 13 million according to the last census in 2012. Of these, 68.3 percent of all households live in rural areas and 31.7 percent in urban areas. 52.4 percent of the population is female and 47.6 percent is male. The country's statistics agency, ZimStat has said 62.6 percent, of all households, which translates to just over eight million of the 13 million people are considered poor, and of these, 16 percent live in extreme poverty. The incidence of poverty is much higher in Zimbabwe's rural areas as 76 percent of rural households are poor with 30.4 percent living in extreme poverty, as compared to 38.2 percent of urban households who are poor with 5.6 percent living in extreme poverty³.

Up till December 2015, poverty was an issue that was high on the international and Zimbabwe's development agenda, with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) first goal to “eradicate extreme poverty and hunger”. In Zimbabwe's

¹ ZimStat, Zimbabwe Poverty Atlas 2015

² GOZ – Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, *Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2016 – 2018*, Harare, 2016

³ ZimStat, Poverty, Income, Consumption and Expenditure Report 2011, Zimbabwe

MDGs report for 2000 – 2015, the government acknowledged that the first goal to eradicate extreme hunger and poverty was not met and that:

“The main unfinished business here is the eradication of both structural and transient poverty in all its forms, everywhere, and the reduction of inequalities, in the context of a broad-based, inclusive, pro-poor, gender-sensitive and dynamic economy, capable of generating decent jobs and sustaining high growth.”⁴

Zimbabwe has in the last decade and a half been devastated by natural disasters that include floods, recurrent droughts, and economic and political instability; with statistics showing a steady rise in rural poverty since 2001. Despite having an agro-based economy, the majority of rural households in Zimbabwe are net food buyers who do not produce enough food to meet their needs through to the next harvest season and as a consequence, have to rely on markets and other non-farm sources such as casual labour to bridge the food gap to the next season¹. The Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZIMVAC) 2016 Rural Livelihoods Assessment (RLA) indicated that rural food insecurity prevalence would in the 2016-2017 period peak at 42 percent between January and March 2017; the highest it has been since 2009. This will mean that an estimated 4.1 million people living in rural areas will be food insecure.

In addition to food insecurity, the country has experienced increased economic challenges in different sectors. The rate of formal employment in Zimbabwe is low, with the Zimbabwe Statistical Agency (ZimStat) noting that there were only 15.2 percent of economically active people in paid employment in a report released in 2012, with only seven percent of people in paid employment in rural areas in 2011; putting the unemployment rate in Zimbabwe at over 80 percent.⁵ This situation could have worsened in 2016 as the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Small to Medium Enterprises reported that more than 55,000 jobs were lost over the three year period, 2014-2016 while more than 4,000 companies shut down⁶.

In addition, the 2015 Zimbabwe MDG progress report noted that Zimbabwe in the last one and a half decades faced massive de-industrialization, weak foreign direct investment inflows, unemployment, and extensive informalisation of the economy, among other challenges that deepened poverty. Despite the many challenges, the report however noted a marked improvement in availability of selected medicines in health care facilities as well as increased mobile cellular penetration, which increased from two percent in 2000 to 81 percent in 2014, as the few achievements in the last 15 years.⁷

⁴ Ministry of macro-Economic Planning and Investment promotion (Zimbabwe) and UNDP, Zimbabwe Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2000 – 2015 final progress report, Harare, 2015

⁵ ZimStat, Poverty, Income, Consumption and Expenditure Report 2011, Zimbabwe

⁶ <http://www.chronicle.co.zw/55000-workers-lose-jobs-in-three-years/>

⁷ Ministry of macro-Economic Planning and Investment promotion (Zimbabwe) and UNDP, Zimbabwe Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2000 – 2015 final progress report, Harare, 2015

1.2 Methodology

Nineteen local news outlets from the mainstream print and electronic media were monitored in this report, from 1 April to 30 April 2016. The outlets were chosen from both the privately owned and state-controlled media to give a balanced perspective on the existing state of poverty reporting in Zimbabwe. Eleven of the news outlets included in this research are print media while the remaining eight are the electronic media (1 television and 7 radio stations).

Of the outlets monitored, 16 publish and broadcast nationally whilst *Manica Post* and *Masvingo Mirror* are provincial papers. Even though, the *Chronicle* and *Sunday News* have a national circulation, their content is predominantly regional, covering the southern part of the country.

In the press news articles, features, opinion pieces, editorial commentaries, pictures, letters to the editor and cartoons that are directly linked to stories on poverty in Zimbabwe were monitored during the period under study. For the electronic media, only news items were monitored. All the stations' news bulletins for the day were monitored. News items that were repeated were only recorded once.

Media Monitors used coding sheets for the monitoring and analysis. Both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the stories were monitored. Quantitatively, the research looked at the number of stories per subject, stories per genre, amount of space and time allocated to stories on poverty as well as the number of sources who were quoted in the stories on poverty. Qualitative monitoring looked professional aspects of news reports in reporting that looked at photographs, sourcing patterns and story angles among other issues.

Zimbabwe's media landscape consists of a range of outlets that include state owned/public, private and community owned outlets. The project monitored 11 print media publications; five under the country's biggest newspaper stable, Zimpapers – and six privately owned publications. Zimpapers is a company set up to represent the interests of ordinary Zimbabweans therefore has a strong public interest mandate.

Six of the other newspapers that were monitored are run by four separate publishers who include; Alpha Media Holdings (*NewsDay*, *The Standard* and *Zimbabwe Independent*), Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe (*Daily News*), Financial Gazette (*Financial Gazette*) and Virginia Takaona (*Masvingo Mirror*).

Newspaper	Publisher	Frequency
The Herald	Zimpapers	Daily
The Chronicle	Zimpapers	Daily
Manica Post	Zimpapers	Weekly
The Sunday Mail	Zimpapers	Weekly
The Sunday News	Zimpapers	Weekly
Newsday	Alpha Media Holdings	Daily

Independent	Alpha Media Holdings	Daily
The Standard	Alpha Media Holdings	Weekly
Daily News	Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe	Daily
Financial Gazette	Financial Gazette	Weekly
Masvingo Mirror	Virginia Takaona	Weekly

Broadcasting

Zimbabwe has 14 licensed radio stations that broadcast on FM and several others that broadcast via other media, that include satellite and online. This research monitored 7seven of these radio stations:

- Four under the public broadcaster, Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) – SFM, Radio Zimbabwe, Power FM and National FM
- Two “national commercial” stations AB Communication’s ZiFM and Zimpapers’ Star FM
- Channel Zim – a satellite broadcaster, which features different players, found on free to air decoders. The broadcasters on Channel Zim are Radio Voice of the People (VOP), Radio Dialogue, Voice of America's Studio 7, Patsaka Nyaminyami, Wezhira Radio, Community Radio Harare (CORAH FM) and Radio Kwelaz

In addition, the research monitored content from Zimbabwe’s sole television station, ZTV1, which is wholly state-owned

Station	Owner
SFM	Public/State
Radio Zimbabwe	Public/State
Power FM	Public/State
National FM	Public/State
ZiFM	Private commercial - AB Communications
Star FM	Private commercial – Zimpapers
Channel Zim	Private non-profit
ZTV	Public/State

The study monitored all news content from the identified outlets and pulled out all news articles that looked at an aspect of poverty, using 13 categorizations of poverty by subject as indicated in the table below. 21 indicators were monitored for these articles that looked at placement of news stories, sourcing patterns, identification of people who made the news, representation of poverty, policy analysis and a

qualitative analysis of news articles. In print media, all news articles were monitored, and on radio and television, only news bulletins were monitored.

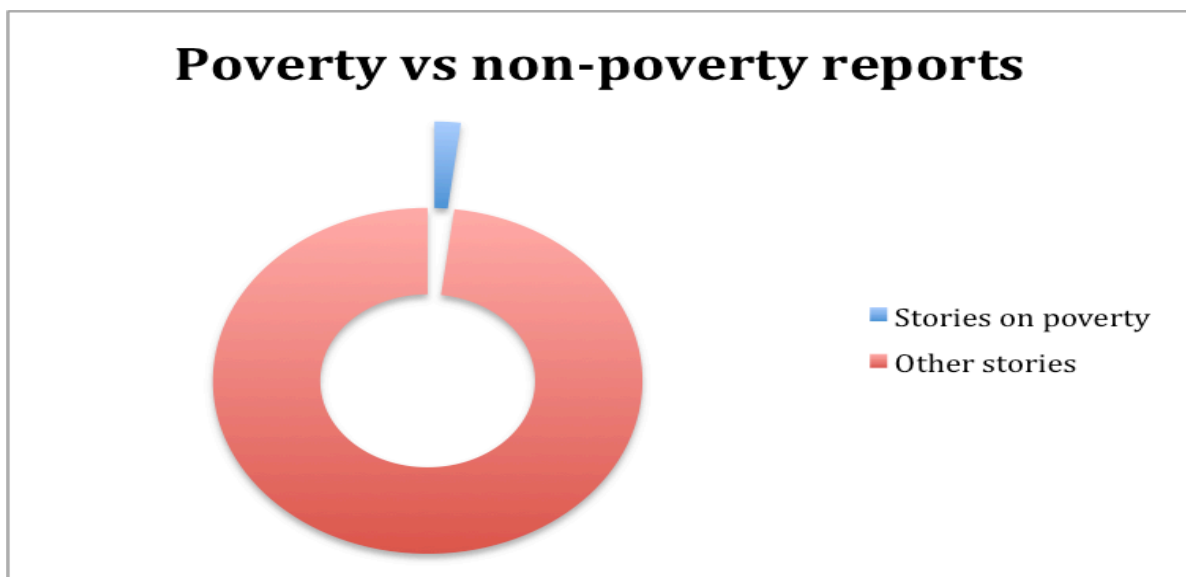
Category	Definition
Credit	Lack of or inadequate access to credit
Education	Lack of education, low education, illiteracy
Employment	Unstable employment, unemployment. This report focuses on formal employment
Exclusion	Isolation, marginalization, social exclusion
Food	Hunger, famine, lack of food, inadequate food
Health	Inadequate health care, lack of access to care, disease
Housing	Precarious living conditions, homelessness
Infrastructure	Poor infrastructure (roads, telecommunications...)
Land rights	Lack of land tenure, ownership
Mental issues	Mental health issues, depression
Sanitation	Poor sanitation
Water	Inadequate access to clean water
General	Poverty in general

2.0 Chapter Two: The Monitoring Findings

2.1 The Untold Story

Poverty is a subject that remains on the margins of news reporting in the media. Less than two percent (1.98%) of the stories within the one-month monitoring period focused on poverty, which is ironical given that almost 70 percent of the population lives in poverty. When two thirds of a people have no food, water, employment or housing, it would seem logical that these issues would be the ones that would be of importance.

Fig 1: Proportion of poverty reports to total news content



It is widely recognised that journalism can play a critical role in promoting policy reform through showcasing social injustice, therefore fulfilling the “fourth estate” role in holding government to account. The widely acclaimed account by American photographer Jacob Riis, who published the document “*How the other half lives*” in the 1890s showing gruelling images of poverty is credited with changing housing policies by the government that took into account of the needs of the poor.

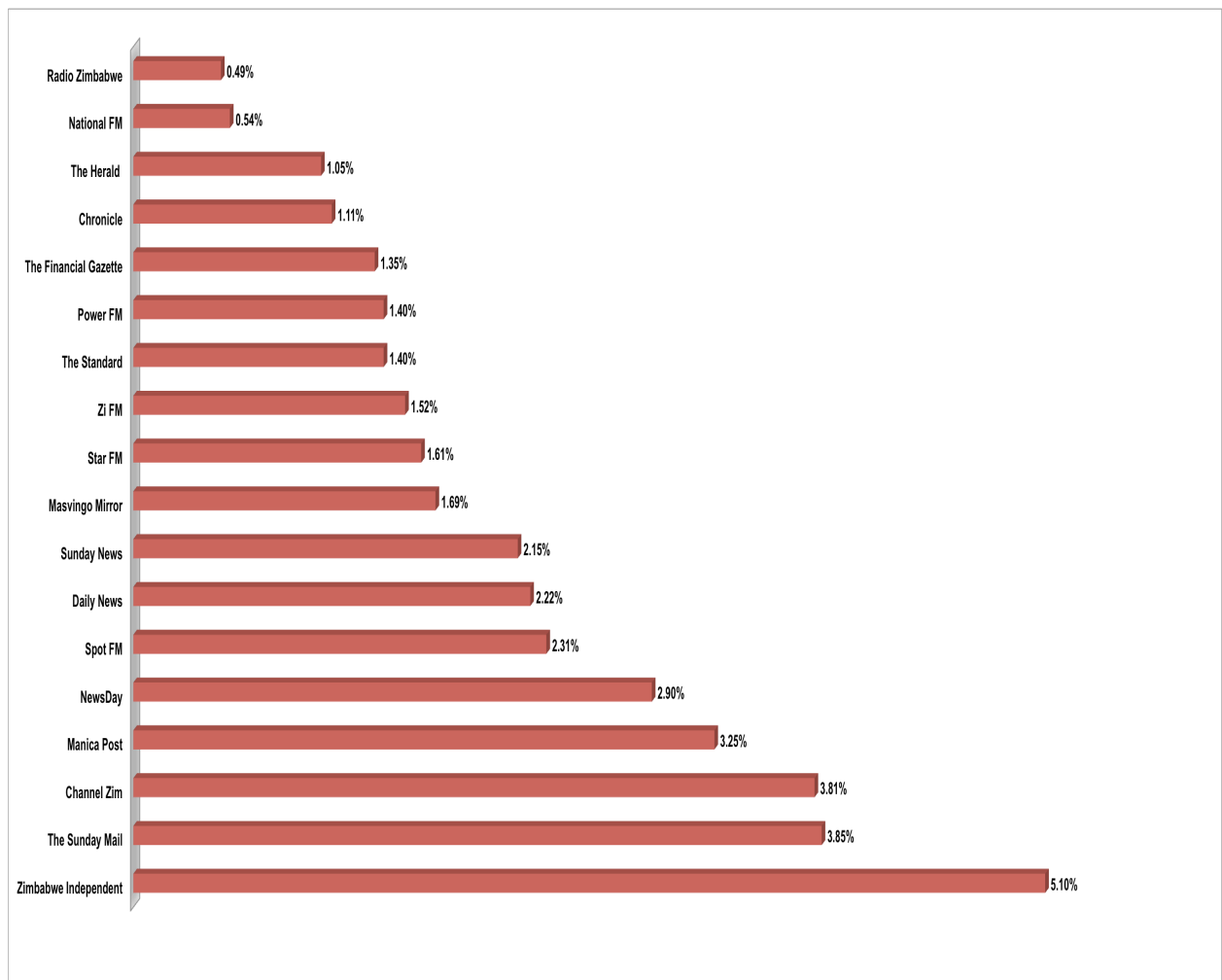
Box 1: How the other half lives – The role of journalism in social reform

Photojournalist Jacob Riis’ photographs and their use in the media are credited for leading to social reform in New York in the 1890s. Jacob Riis published the document *How the Other Half Lives* in 1890 giving a harsh account of life in the worst slums of New York that had the “fascinating and terrible statistics on tenement living and reproductions of his revelatory photographs. According to the Smithsonian.com, not only did the publication sell well, but it inspired Roosevelt to close the worst of the lodging houses and spurred city officials to reform and enforce the city’s housing policies. To once again quote the Future President of the United States: “The countless evils which lurk in the dark corners of our civic institutions, which stalk abroad in the slums, and have their permanent abode in the crowded tenement houses, have met in Mr. Riis the most formidable opponent ever encountered by them in New York City .”

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/pioneering-social-reformer-jacob-riis-revealed-how-other-half-lives-america-180951546/#UTYRPWmS8L4KJs1H.99>

While the different outlets carried various percentages of poverty reports, none of the monitored media had more than five percent of poverty reports. The *Zimbabwe Independent* carried the most stories on poverty with just over five percent of its stories focusing on poverty. Radio Zimbabwe had the lowest percentage of stories on poverty with 0.49 percent of stories on poverty.

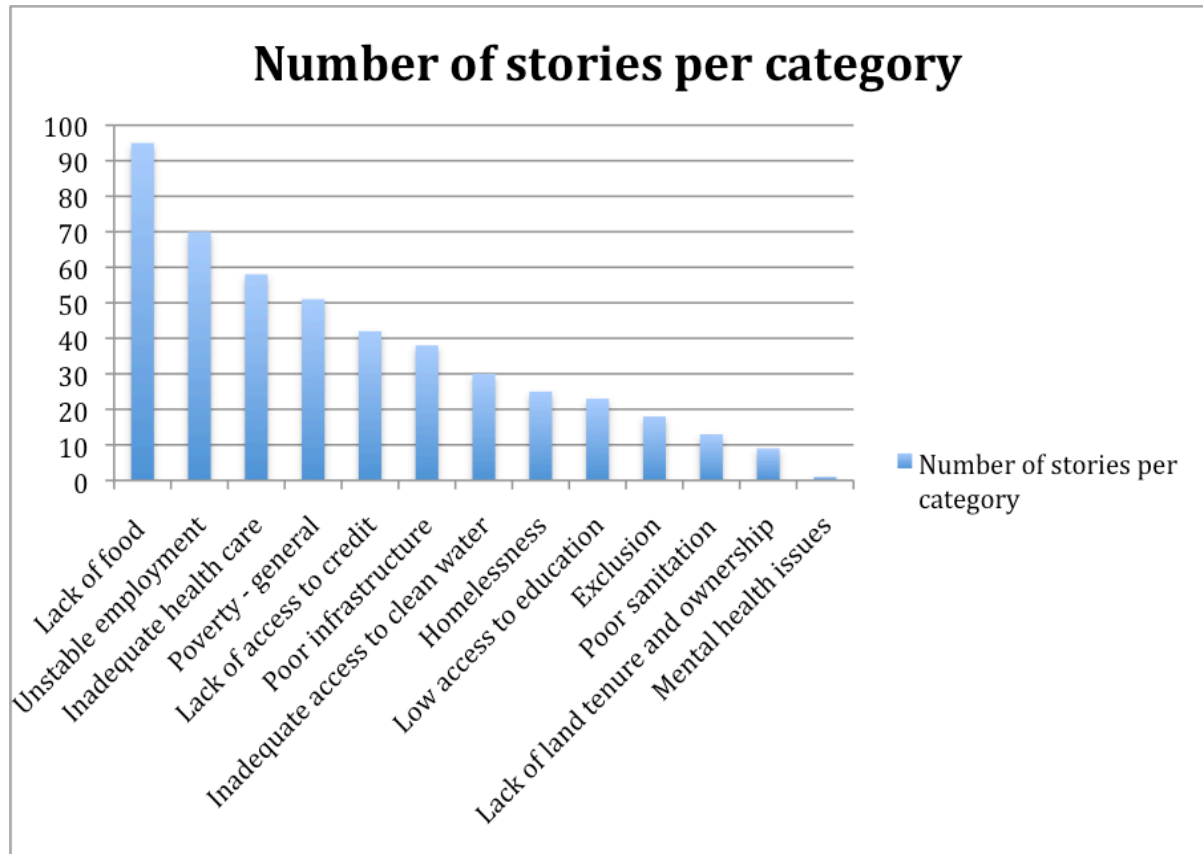
Fig 2: % of poverty reports per media outlet



2.2 Most reported aspect of poverty

When the media did report on poverty, the biggest issue in the monitoring of poverty was on hunger, famine and the general lack of food and the least reported aspect was on mental health.

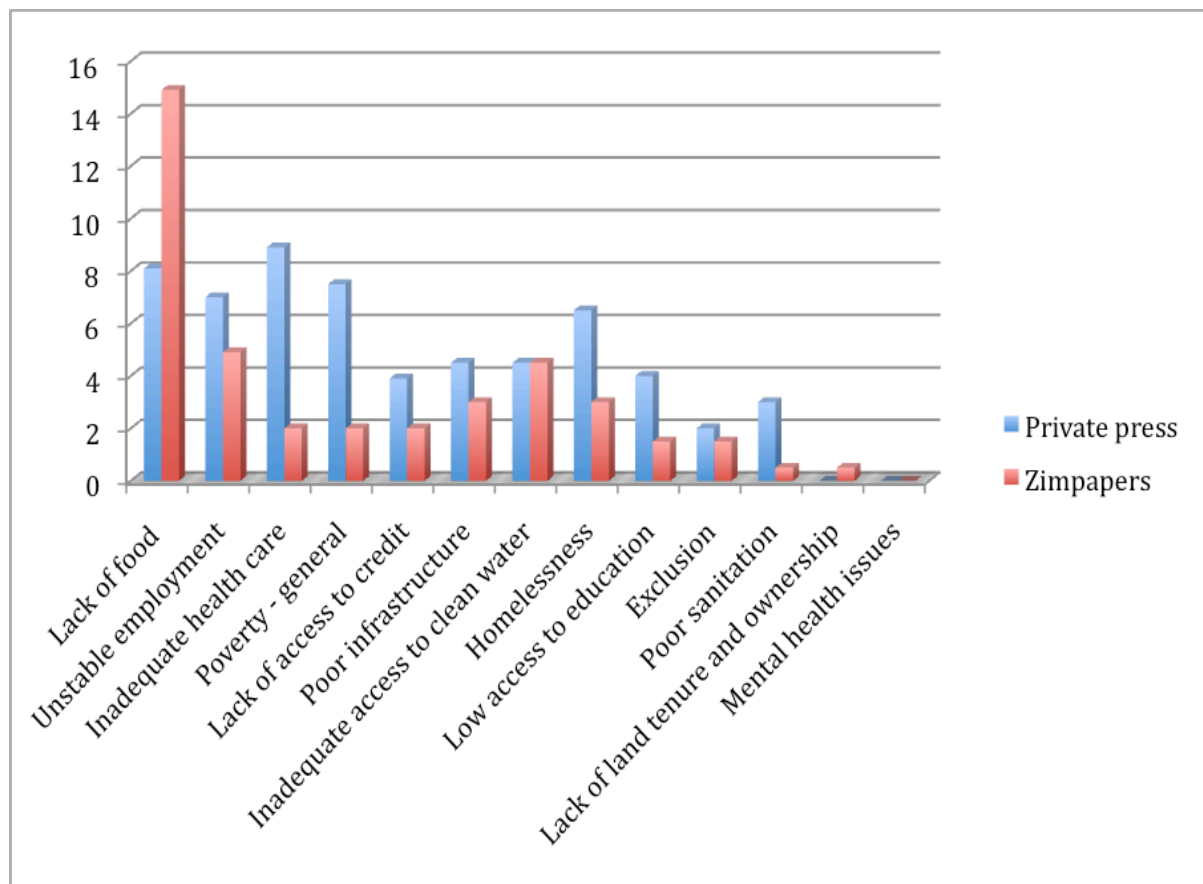
Fig 3: What aspect of poverty was reported on?



2.3 Print media and poverty reporting

In comparison to public media, privately owned publications contained more stories on poverty than the public newspapers. Private media carried 59.7 percent of all the stories on poverty as compared to the public media's 40.3 percent. The most reported issue was hunger and the lack of food with 23 percent of stories on poverty focusing on this issue. Priority issues in private and public papers differed however. The Zimpapers group reported more on the lack of food than any other issue. Overall the private papers wrote more on inadequate access to health care, although there were other dominant themes such as lack of food, unemployment and homelessness.

Fig 4: A comparison of private and public media priorities in reporting poverty



2.4 Distribution of poverty issues in the daily newspapers

The *NewsDay* had the highest number of stories on poverty in the daily newspapers during the monitoring period, followed by *The Herald*, *Daily News* and *Chronicle* in descending order. The lack of food was the most reported topic by the daily newspapers, with *The Herald* carrying the majority of stories on the issue.

Table 1: Daily newspaper reports on poverty

Poverty Indicator	The Herald	Chronicle	Daily News	NewsDay	Total percentage
Lack of access to credit	1	0	2	0	2
Lack of Education	0	0	4	2	5
Unstable/Unemployment	3	1	1	6	8
Exclusion	0	2	1	3	5
Lack of Food	14	5	6	6	24
Poor Health Care	3	0	7	5	11
Lack of Housing	2	1	3	7	10
Poor Infrastructure	3	0	0	9	9
Lack of Land Tenure	1	0	0	0	1
Mental Issues	0	0	0	0	0
Poor Sanitation	1	0	1	2	3
Access to Water	4	2	1	6	10

General Poverty	3	0	10	3	12
Total	35	11	34	49	100

2.5 Distribution of poverty subjects in the weekly newspapers

The Sunday Mail carried the majority of stories on reporting poverty of all the weekly publications, followed by the *Zimbabwe Independent*; and the *Manica Post* coming in third. The lack of food is the most widely reported poverty issue across all publications, with 21 stories, followed by unstable employment with 19, and lack of access to credit with 13 stories. As with the daily publications, the weeklies had different focus areas.

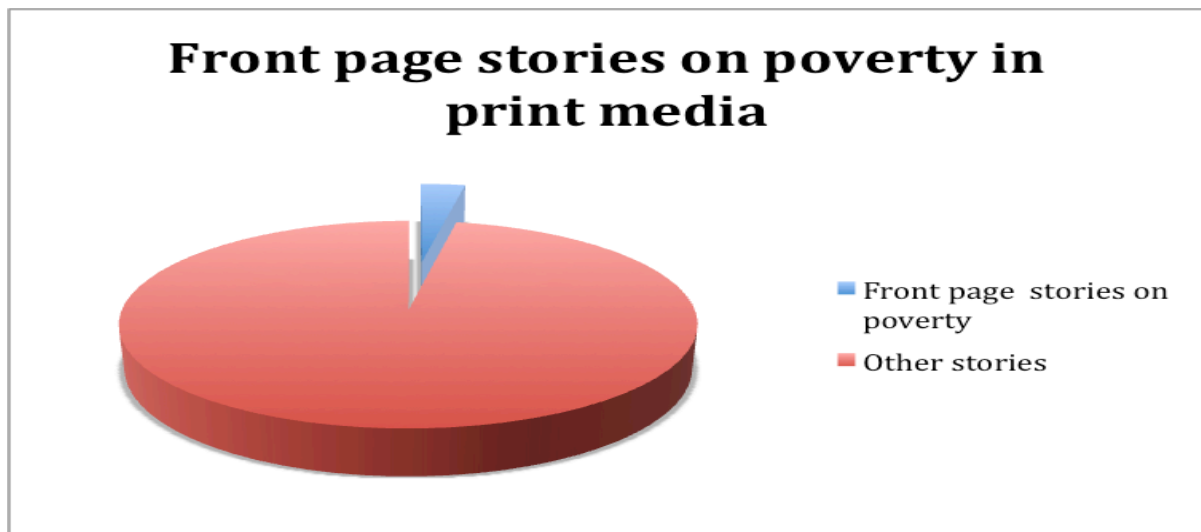
Table 2: Weekly newspapers reports on poverty

Poverty Indicator	Sunday Mail	Sunday News	Manica Post	The Standard	Zimbabwe Independent	Financial Gazette	Masvingo Mirror	Total %
Lack of access to credit	2	0	1	0	5	1	0	13
Lack of Education	1	0	2	1	0	0	1	7
Unstable/Unemployment	2	3	1	1	4	2	0	19
Exclusion	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Lack of Food	4	5	2	0	1	2	1	21
Poor Health Care	1	0	0	1	2	0	3	10
Lack of Housing	0	1	2	0	0	1	2	9
Poor Infrastructure	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	4
Lack of Land Tenure	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mental Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Poor Sanitation	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	4
Access to Water	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	7
Poverty	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	4
Total	14	10	11	5	13	7	10	100

2.6 Prominence of poverty reports in print media

The placement of news stories, i.e. where stories on poverty appeared in the media was used as an indicator of the relative importance of poverty as an issue compared to other stories. In print media, the research compared the front page as compared to the rest of the sections in the paper. The front page of a newspaper is its selling point and indicates the high importance placed on an issue. For radio and TV, the study looked at the lead story as compared to other sections of the bulletins.

Fig. 5 Front-page coverage of poverty stories in the print media



Of all the poverty related stories that were published by the newspapers, only three percent were featured on the front pages. *The Herald*, *The Chronicle*, *The Sunday Mail*, *Sunday News* and *Masvingo Mirror* all carried one story each on the front page. Three of the stories on the front pages were on unstable employment, one on lack of food and the other on lack of access to credit.

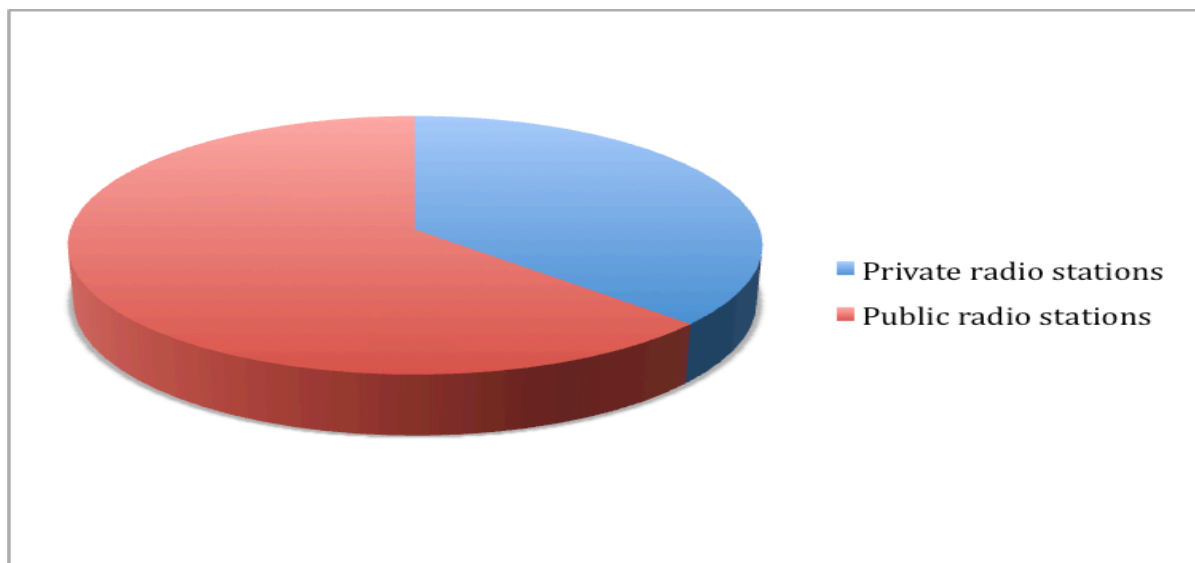
Editorial comments are another indicator of the importance placed on an issue by a publication. Normally written by senior editorial staff of the newspaper, these indicate issues that the newspaper views as important. During the period monitored, six editorial comments were on poverty. *Newsday* carried three commentaries, the *Daily News* had two and the *Chronicle* had one. Five different issues were covered by the editorials; lack of housing, lack of access to credit, poor education facilities, lack of food and poor infrastructure.

Little in-depth reporting was found in the monitored newspapers during the period under review. Feature articles give an in-depth analysis of a situation and insights on the plight of a group of people as well as shed light on a situation that members of the public may not be aware of. During this research period, there was only one feature report on the general state of poverty in the country published in the *Daily News*.

2.7 Radio and poverty reporting

Radio carried the most stories on poverty compared to the other media platforms that were monitored with 41 percent of all news reports on poverty, with the government-controlled radio stations carrying more poverty related stories than the private radio stations. Spot FM had the highest number of stories with National FM carrying the least.

Fig 6: Proportion of poverty reports in private and public media



2.8 Distribution of poverty subjects on the monitored radio stations

Lack of food was the most topical issue on radio. This issue constituted 17.4 percent of the radio stations' coverage of poverty ahead of stories on unstable employment and poor health care, which were, reported the second and third most number of times respectively. Public radio reported more on poor health care than any other issue, while private radio stations reported more on lack of food. The state-controlled radio stations featured reports on all the 13 poverty indicators whilst the privately owned radio stations did not carry any stories on mental issues and access to water.

Fig 7: Poverty subjects on radio

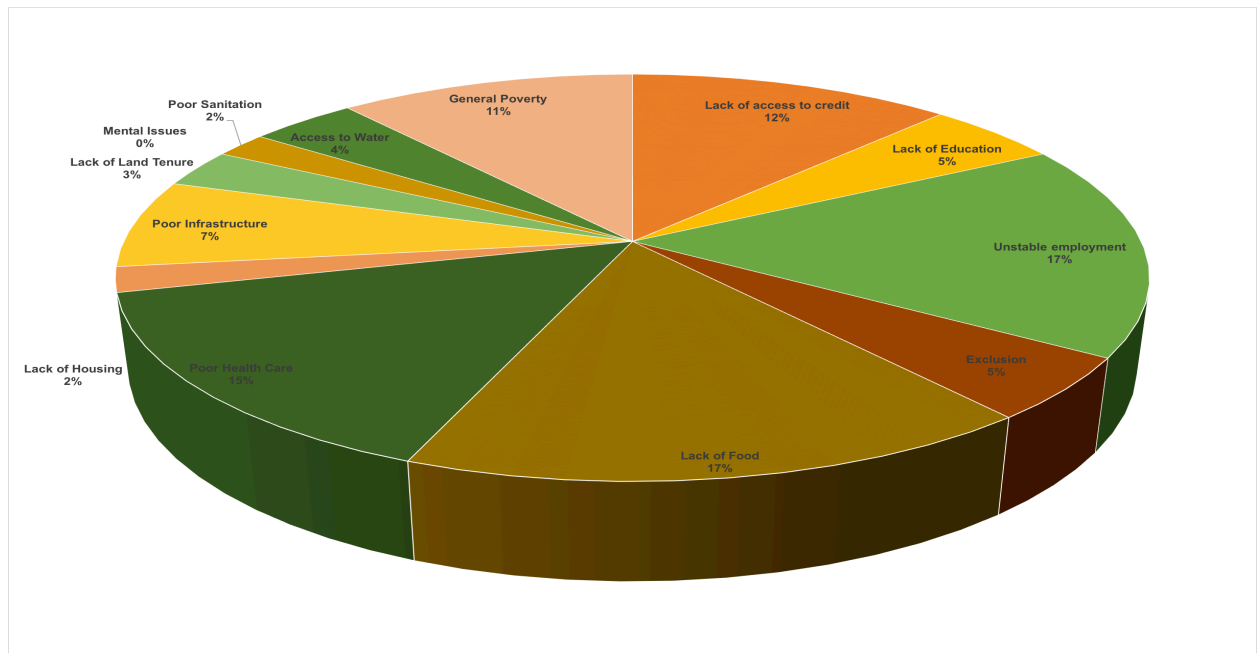
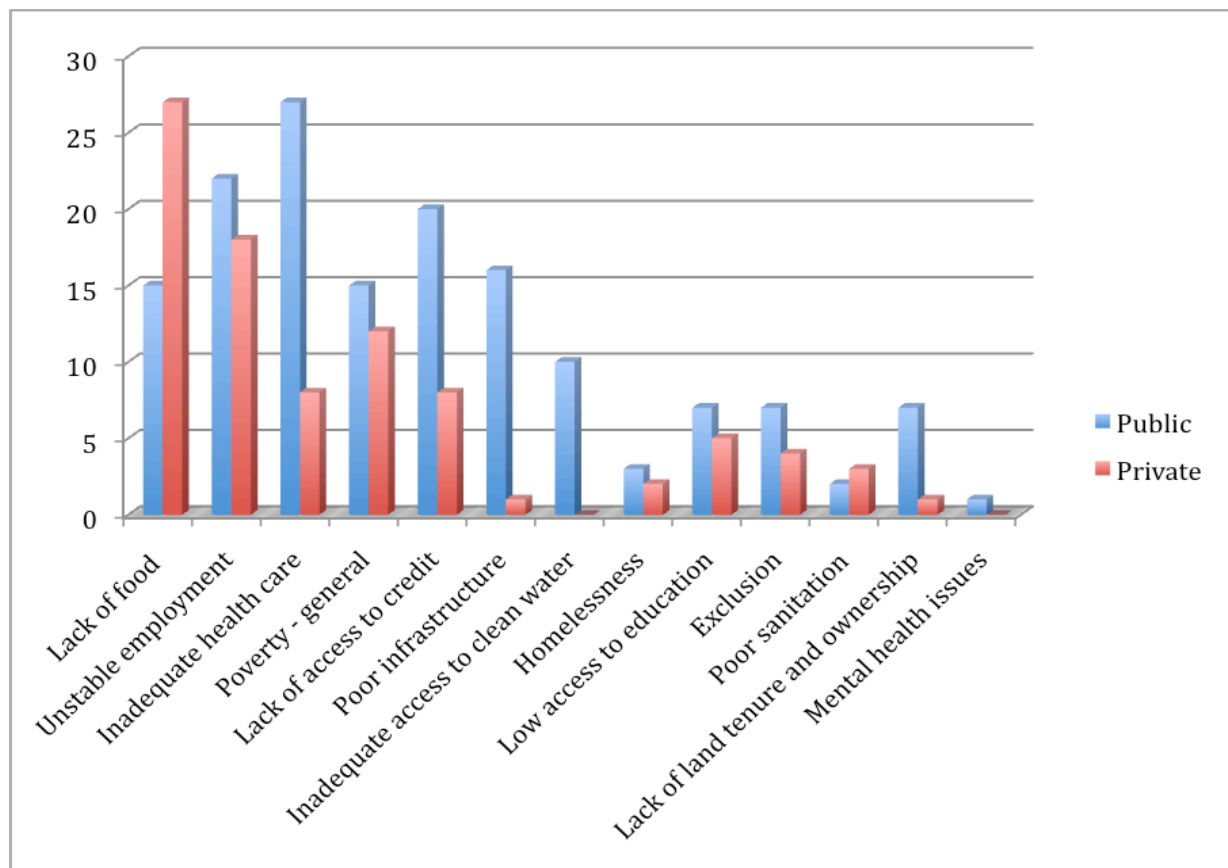


Fig 8: Distribution of poverty subjects in the public and private radio stations



2.9 Government/public radio stations

In the government controlled radio stations, SFM carried the most stories on poverty with 65 stories followed by Power FM, Radio Zimbabwe and National FM respectively as shown below. SFM also had the most diverse coverage of poverty related issues as it featured stories on 11 of the 13 poverty indicators. Conversely, Radio Zimbabwe was the least diverse as it addressed seven of the 13 poverty related subjects.

Fig 9: Distribution of poverty subjects on public radio stations

Poverty Indicator	SFM	Radio Zimbabwe	Power FM	National FM	% Total
Lack of access to credit	12	3	4	1	13%
Lack of Education	0	4	3	0	5%
Unstable employment	7	0	10	5	14%
Exclusion	2	4	0	1	5%
Lack of Food	5	2	6	2	10%
Poor Health Care	10	4	10	3	18%
Lack of Housing	2	0	1	0	2%
Poor Infrastructure	7	2	5	2	10%
Lack of Land Tenure	7	0	0	0	5%
Mental Issues	0	1	0	0	1%
Poor Sanitation	1	0	1	0	1%
Access to Water	4	0	4	2	6%
General Poverty	8	0	5	2	10%
Total	65	20	49	18	100%

2.10 Privately owned radio stations

Of the privately owned radio stations, Channel Zim recorded the most stories on poverty with 38 stories appearing on the channel, followed by ZiFM and Star FM respectively. Lack of food was the most topical issue in the private stations during the monitoring period, followed by unstable employment. Channel Zim also had the broadest coverage of poverty related issues; it featured reports on 10 of the 13 poverty indicators as compared to ZiFM's nine and Star FM's seven.

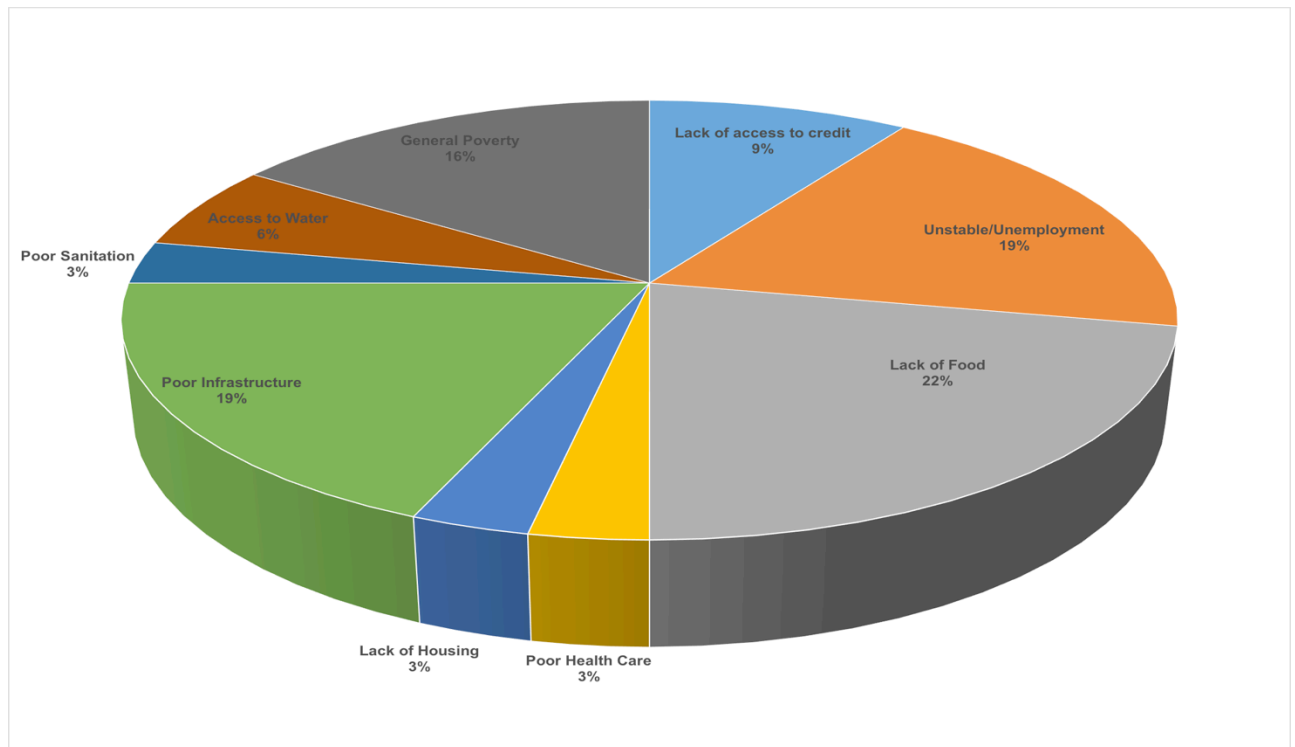
Fig 10: Distribution of poverty subjects on the privately-owned radio stations

Poverty Indicator	ZIFM	Star FM	Channel Zim	% Total
Lack of access to credit	2	5	1	9%
Lack of education	2	1	2	6%
Unstable employment	2	4	12	20%
Exclusion	2	1	1	5%
Lack of Food	8	10	9	30%
Poor health care	4	2	2	9%
Lack of housing	2	0	0	2%
Poor Infrastructure	0	0	1	1%
Lack of land tenure	0	0	1	1%
Mental Issues	0	0	0	0%
Poor sanitation	2	0	1	3%
Access to water	0	0	0	0%
General poverty	3	1	8	14%
Total	27	24	38	100%

2.11 ZTV reporting on poverty

As with print and radio, the lack of food was the most topical poverty issue on television, followed by unstable employment/ unemployment and poor infrastructure.

Fig 11: Distribution of poverty subjects on ZTV



2.12 Prominence of poverty reports in electronic media

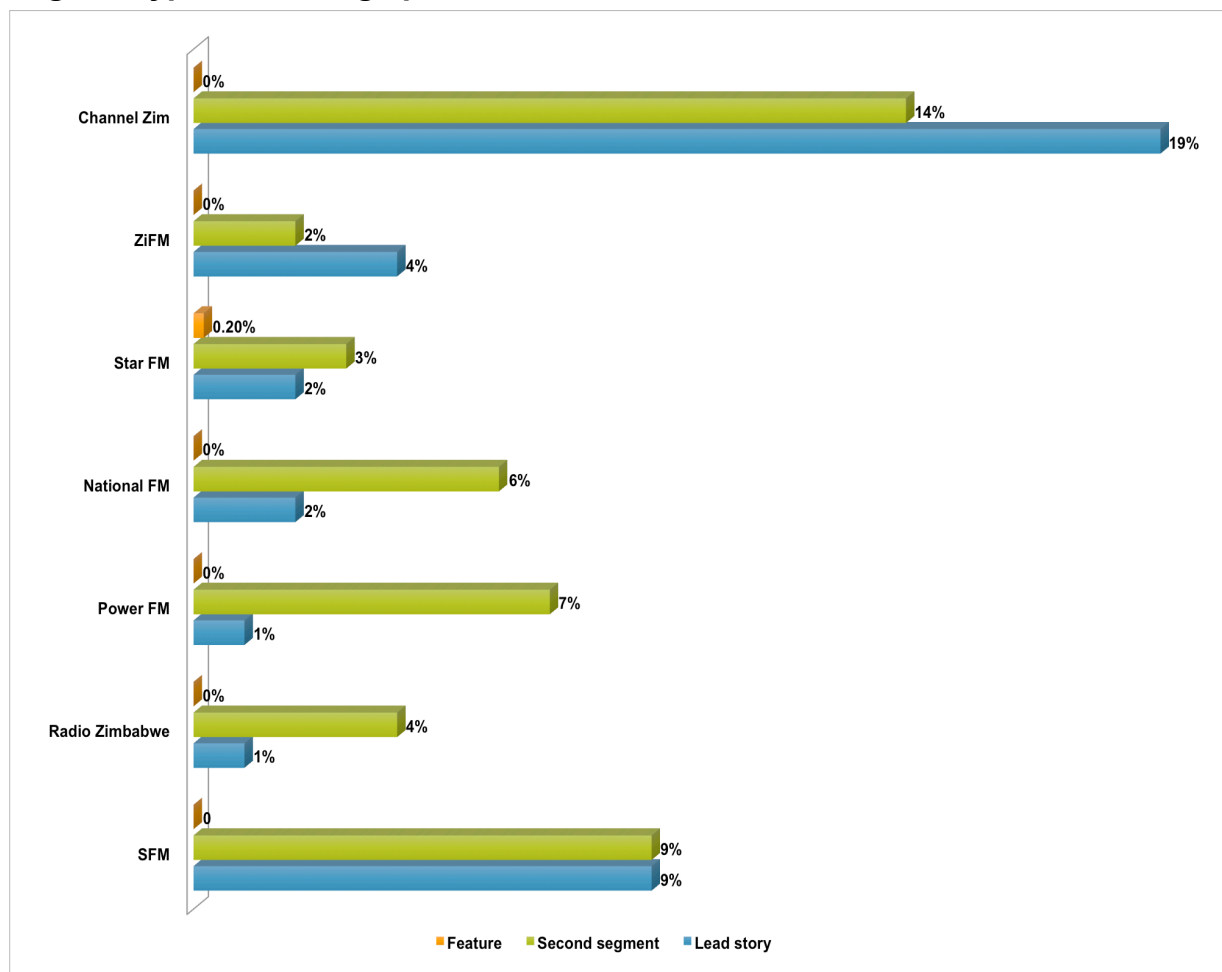
Placement of radio and television news was divided in two categories, the lead story and the second segment. The lead story is the most topical issue in the news bulletin and more time is usually dedicated to it. The second segment for most news bulletins contains local news and specialised reports that include sport and business news.

During the monitoring period, 2,972 news bulletins were monitored across the seven radio stations; stories on poverty were featured as lead stories in just 3.4 percent of these bulletins. In addition, 5,3 percent of the news bulletins contained poverty related stories in the second segment. Feature stories on poverty featured in just 0,03 percent of the bulletins.

Channel Zim gave proportionally more prominence to poverty related stories as 19 percent of the station's bulletins had lead stories on poverty. ZiFM was the only other station that carried more lead stories on poverty in its bulletins as shown in the graph below.

Overall Channel Zim had relatively more poverty stories in the second segment than the other monitored radio stations, 14 percent of its news bulletins monitored contained poverty related news in the second segment.

Fig 12: Type of coverage per radio station



One hundred and twenty (120) news bulletins were monitored on ZTV. Of these, poverty related stories appeared as lead stories in 12 percent of the bulletins. Eighteen percent of the bulletins featured poverty related stories in the second segment. Five of the lead stories were mostly on food shortages and three on unstable employment.

2.13 Rural vs urban – Geographic location and reporting poverty

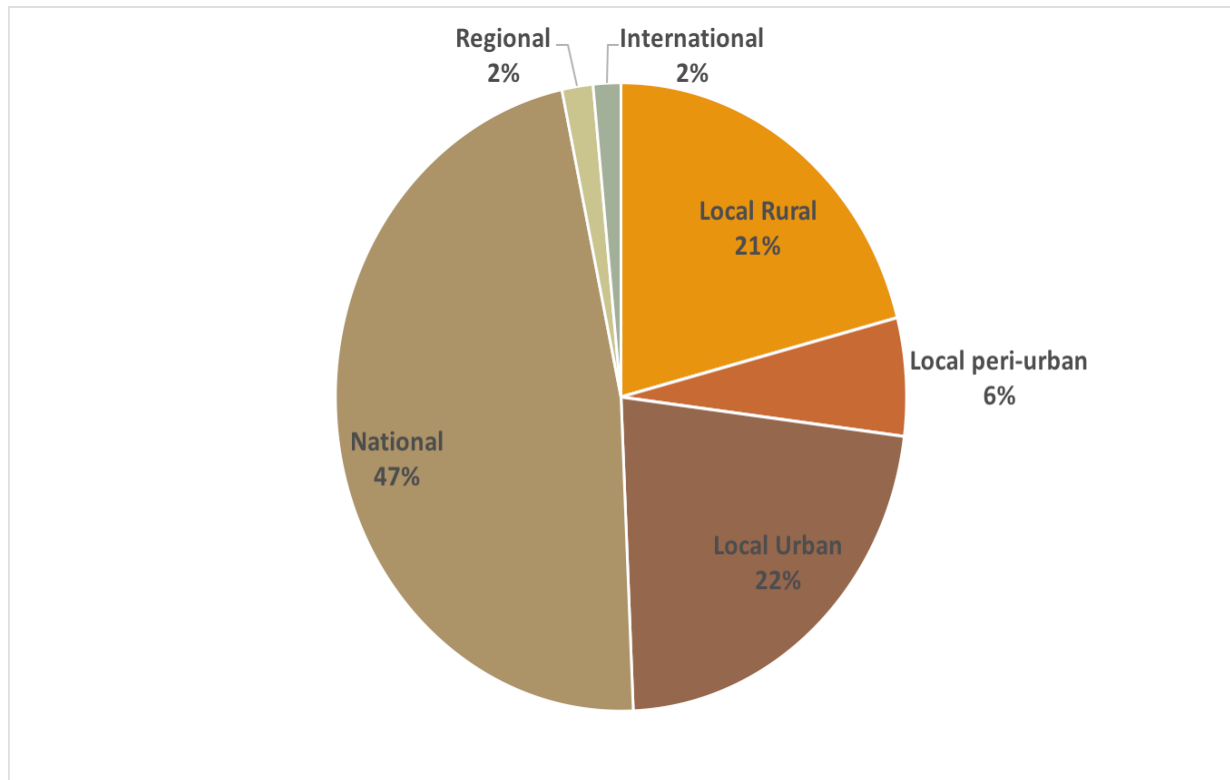
The Zimbabwe Poverty Atlas, produced by ZimStat in 2015⁸ noted that poverty in Zimbabwe is most prevalent in rural districts of Zimbabwe, as compared to urban districts. Matabeleland North, located in the southern part of the country has the highest poverty prevalence at 85.7 percent. Poverty prevalence is lowest in Harare and Bulawayo, the capital and second city respectively.

This study showed that 47 percent of stories on poverty had a national focus. Rural areas with the highest prevalence of poverty were featured in just 21 percent of stories. Local urban communities featured in 22 percent of the news reports, and

⁸ https://www.unicef.org/zimbabwe/Zimbabwe_Poverty_Atlas_2015.pdf

local peri-urban communities in six percent of reports. Four percent of the stories focused on regional or international issues.

Fig 13: Geographical scope of the local media’s coverage of poverty



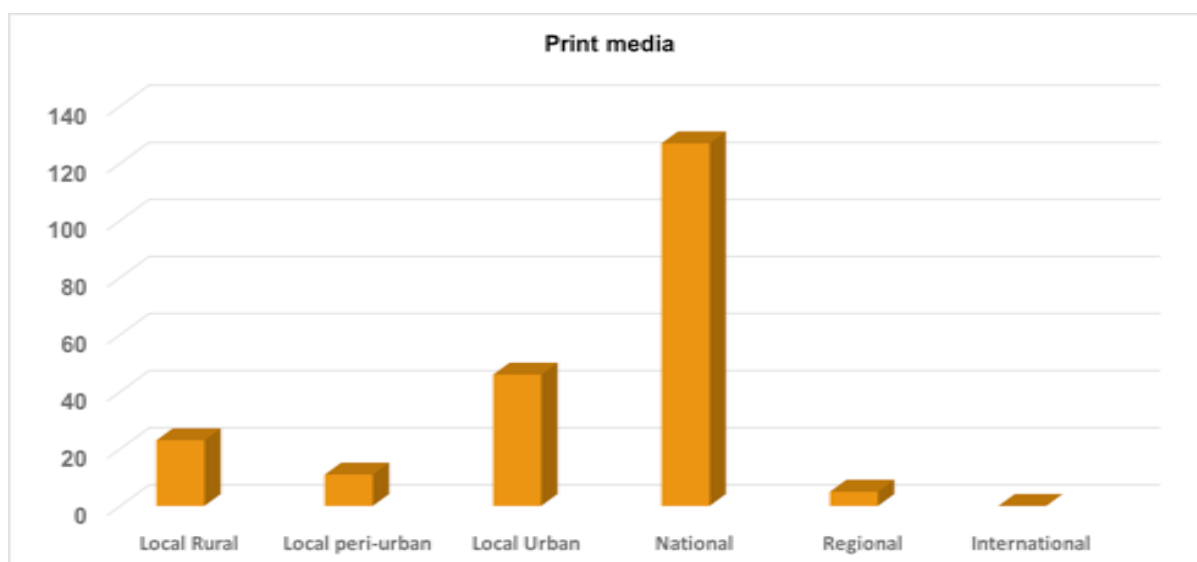
Poverty reports were mostly generic, particularly in the print media and on radio with reports focussing mostly on “national” issues and not specific poverty related issues. These stories tended to generalise the impact of poverty on Zimbabweans; for example there were numerous reports that pegged the number of people affected by drought at four million but who and where these people are located was rarely mentioned in the press reports. This created a hazy picture of the state of affairs in the country, as they did not point out who among the Zimbabwean population were affected the most by poverty.

There were few horizontal and vertical linkages made that related national level issues to what was happening at the regional, or district level, nor what the issues across districts. There were therefore many reports that presented information in silos, focusing exclusively on what was happening at a policy level, without a clear articulation of how developments at a national level affected the local structures and vice versa. While poverty has higher incidence in rural communities, there were a higher number of stories that focused on the urban and less on the rural areas.

2.14 Print media's geographical focus on reporting poverty

As was the general trend, the print media wrote more on poverty at a national level with less reporting on specific geographical locations. Stories with a national focus dominated in eight of the 13 poverty indicators and these were; access to credit, exclusion, unemployment, education, food, health, infrastructure and generic poverty. In urban communities issues that dominated were on land rights, sanitation, water and housing. There were relatively few stories that focused on rural communities. However those that were featured focused on lack of food, unemployment, health, housing, infrastructure and water.

Fig 14: Geographical distribution of issues in the print media



2.15 Reporting on rural areas and poverty in print

The most reported issue in the print media on rural areas was on lack of access to water and hunger/ lack of food, while there was very little or non-existent reporting on access to credit, exclusion, education, land rights and sanitation.

Reporting on issues within the publications failed to make any linkages between policy, national level developments and issues affecting people in a particular area as the box below shows.

Fig 15: Connecting the dots - An example of reporting poverty in rural Zimbabwe

Even though ZTV covered poverty issues affecting the Masvingo Province, there appeared to be no effort to link the impact of different aspects of the same issue. The construction of the Tokwe Mukosi dam was for example

in the following stories presented in isolation from the persistent drought in the Mwenezi District where flood victims from the Tokwe Mukosi basin were relocated. The positive tone of the story on completion of the Tokwe Mukosi Dam is not matched by the pessimism of the effects of drought in another area. Where is the link?

Tokwe Mukosi Dam Construction resumes

ZTV, Sunday, 17 April 2016

Construction of the Tokwe-Mukosi Dam is expected to be completed by year end.

Work at the dam had temporarily stopped with the contractor, Salini Iimpregilio demobilising due to non-payment for work done.

The contractor has however moved back on site after government secured the UIS\$30 million required to see the project to completion.

The Minister of Environment, Water and Climate, Cde Oppah Muchinguri-Kashiri, who visited the dam site, said the completion of the dam is crucial as it will enable irrigation farming at a time when rain fed agriculture is no longer reliable.

"We did not have resources for the construction. The available funds were used to avert a pending national disaster after water levels in the Tokwe Mukosi basin rose. But the Minister of Finance has managed to sell some bonds to raise the required US\$35 million to complete the dam," she said.

The Project Manager, Mr Urbano Luzi told the ZBC News that by year-end, the project will be complete.

"We are now remobilising after the government's assurance to us that the money is now available. We have taken a commitment to ensure the dam will be complete by December," said Mr Luzi.

Currently 95 % complete, Tokwe Mukosi dam will be the biggest inland water reservoir with a carrying capacity of 1,8 billion cubic meters of water when construction is finished.

Drought stalls development in Mwenezi

ZTV, Wednesday, 20, April, 2016

The hard hitting drought in Mwenezi, Masvingo Province has backtracked development as villagers concentrate all efforts and resources on securing food.

As villagers continue to feel the effects of the El Nino induced drought, traditional leaders in Mwenezi said the effects of the drought are hindering development.

Chief Mawarire told the ZBC News that most parents are now failing to pay school fees for their children as they are saving the little they get to purchase food supplies.

They added that villagers are also now unable to contribute towards developmental programmes like rural electrification.

Chief Mawarire also revealed that since the onset of the drought, cases of stock theft have also increased with the highest numbers recorded at Manyuchi dam.

Some villagers have however started receiving food aid from the government, but concerns have been raised that the food aid is not sufficient to cover all the families registered for aid

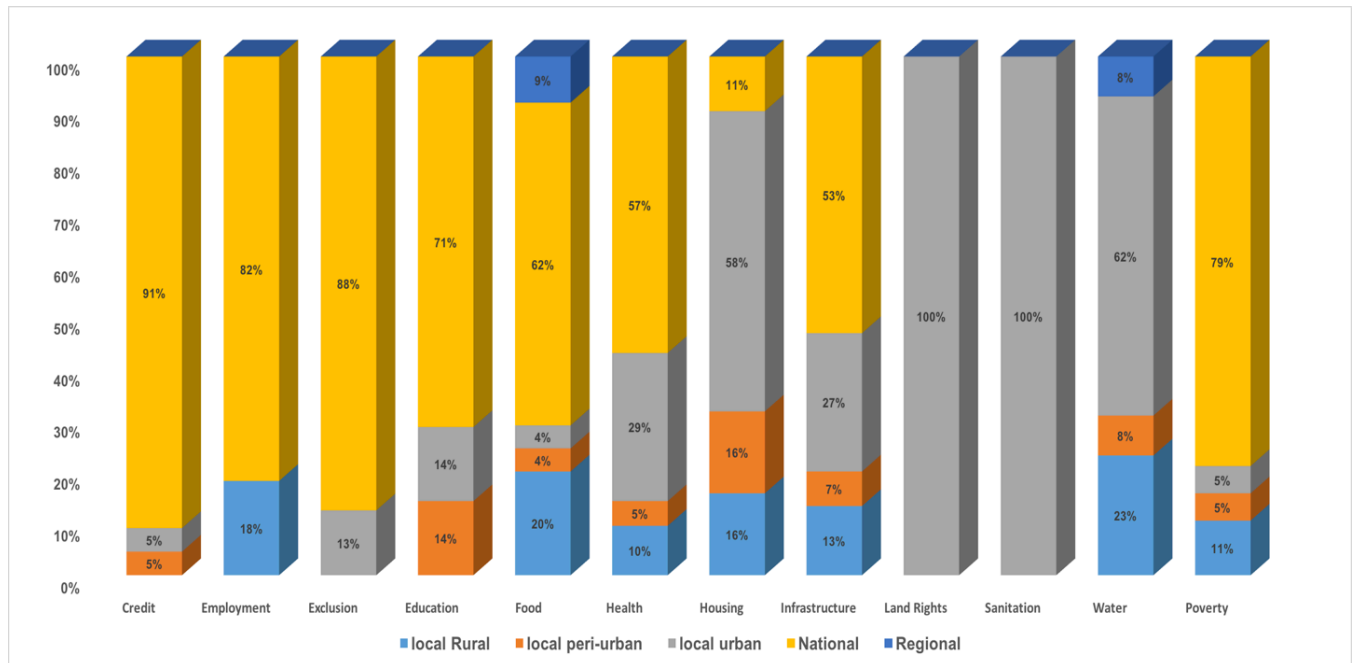
Access to credit has been cited as one of the biggest challenges in the agricultural sector in Zimbabwe, especially for resettled farmers. The lack of finance impacts on the ability of farmers to increase production or diversify operations. It is particularly telling therefore that there were few stories on access to finance that featured local rural areas. The majority of stories took on a national focus while a few featured local urban and peri-urban areas.

While the impact of unemployment and job losses over the last couple of years in the country have been felt across the country, it is interesting that stories only featured national and local rural areas.

2.16 Reporting urban poverty

Stories that came out in the print media on land rights and sanitation focused exclusively on local urban areas. Access to water and housing were also strongly featured in reporting on urban poverty. Interestingly however, none of the stories on unemployment looked at employment in urban or peri-urban areas.

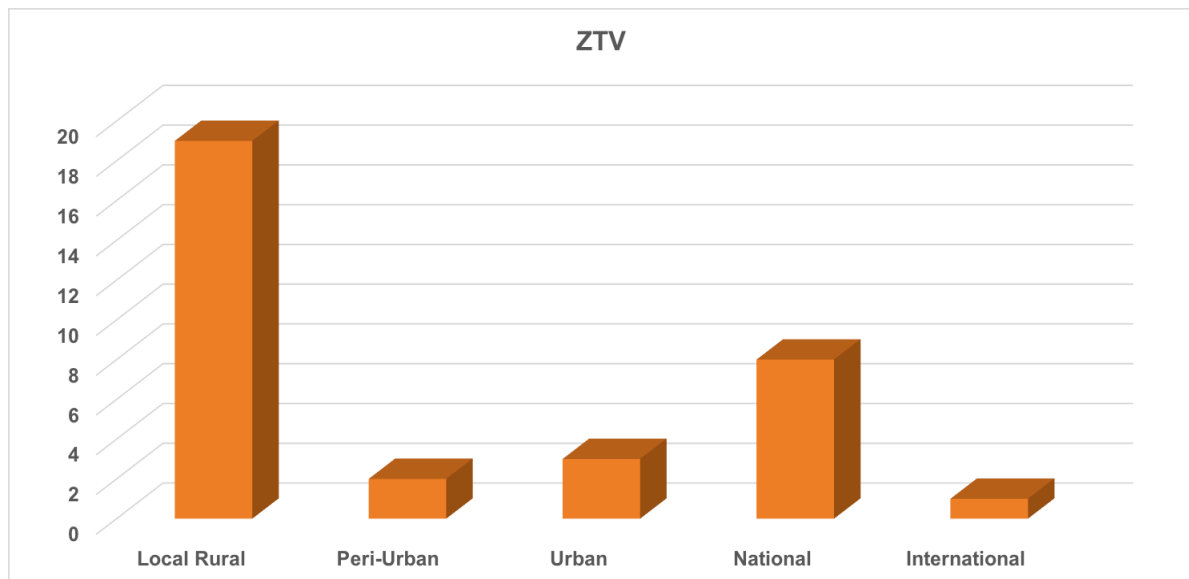
Fig 16: Issues on urban poverty in print media



2.17 Television’s geographical focus

Local community specific reports dominated on television with the majority of stories addressing issues occurring in local rural areas. ZTV was the only news platform whose coverage of poverty related issues mainly focused on local rural communities. Its reports addressed situations in specific rural communities which included: Gwanda, located in Matabeleland South, in the southern part of the country; Marange-Zimunya in the Eastern part of the country, Mwenezi in the southern part of the country among other areas.

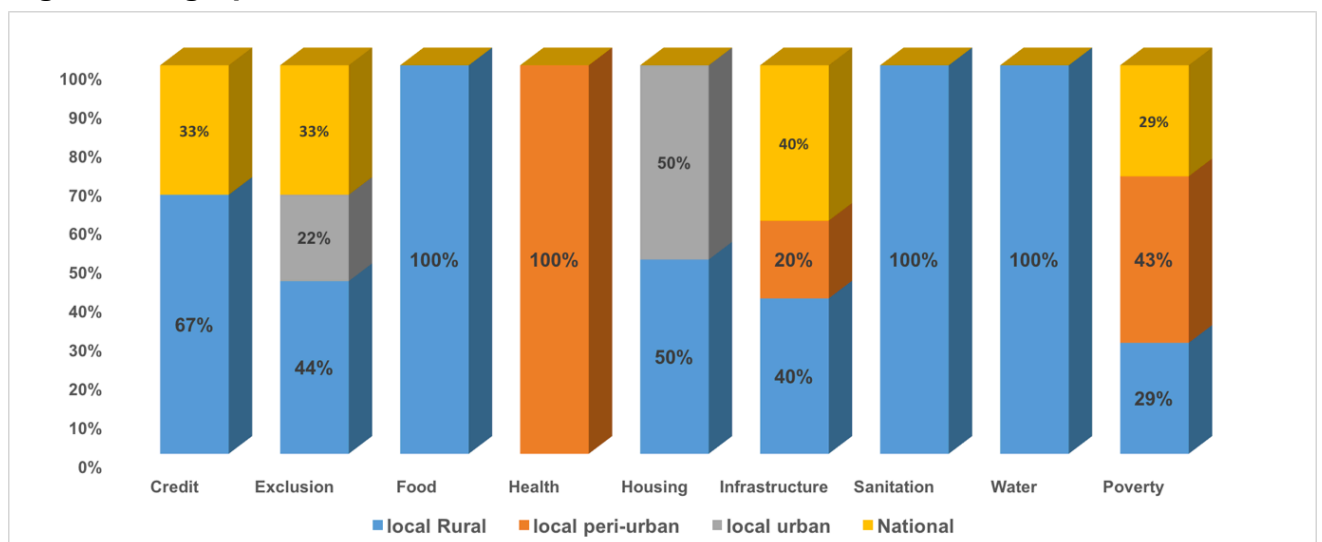
Fig 17: Geographical focus of poverty reports on TV



Most of the mentioned communities in rural localities were beneficiaries of food aid, irrigation schemes and rural electrification. Reporting on hunger, sanitation and water featured exclusively rural communities.

Of interest was that the only issues where local urban areas featured were on housing and exclusion, and issues of health, infrastructure and general poverty were the only categories where peri-urban areas featured.

Fig 18: Geographical distribution of issues on ZTV



2.18 Radio's geographical focus in reporting poverty

Stories with a national focus dominated on radio particularly lack of employment, lack of access to credit and lack of food. Inadequate housing, poor sanitation and social exclusion dominated in reports on urban communities, while issues of land rights, lack of water and poor infrastructure dominated reporting on rural communities.

Fig 19: Geographic distribution of poverty reports on radio

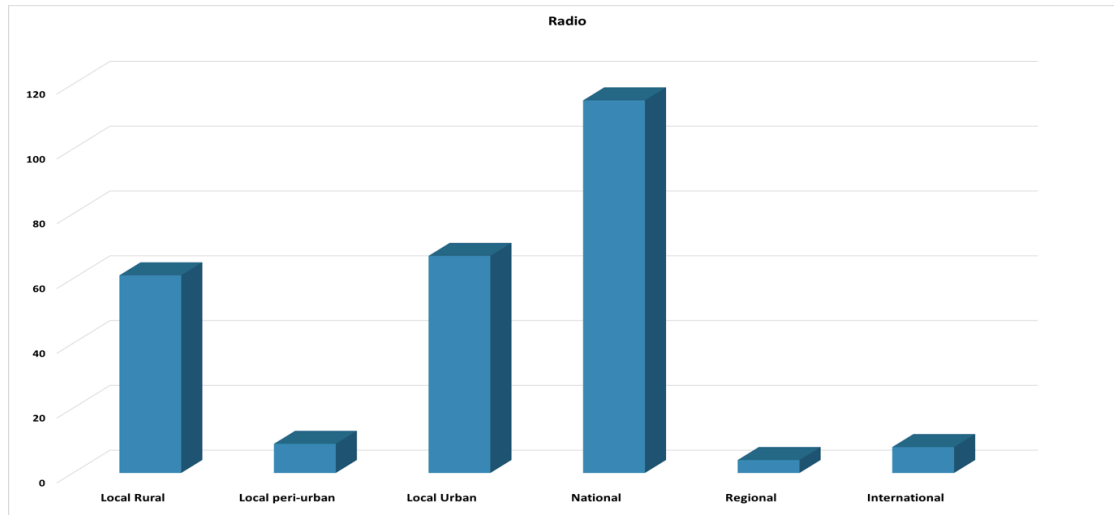
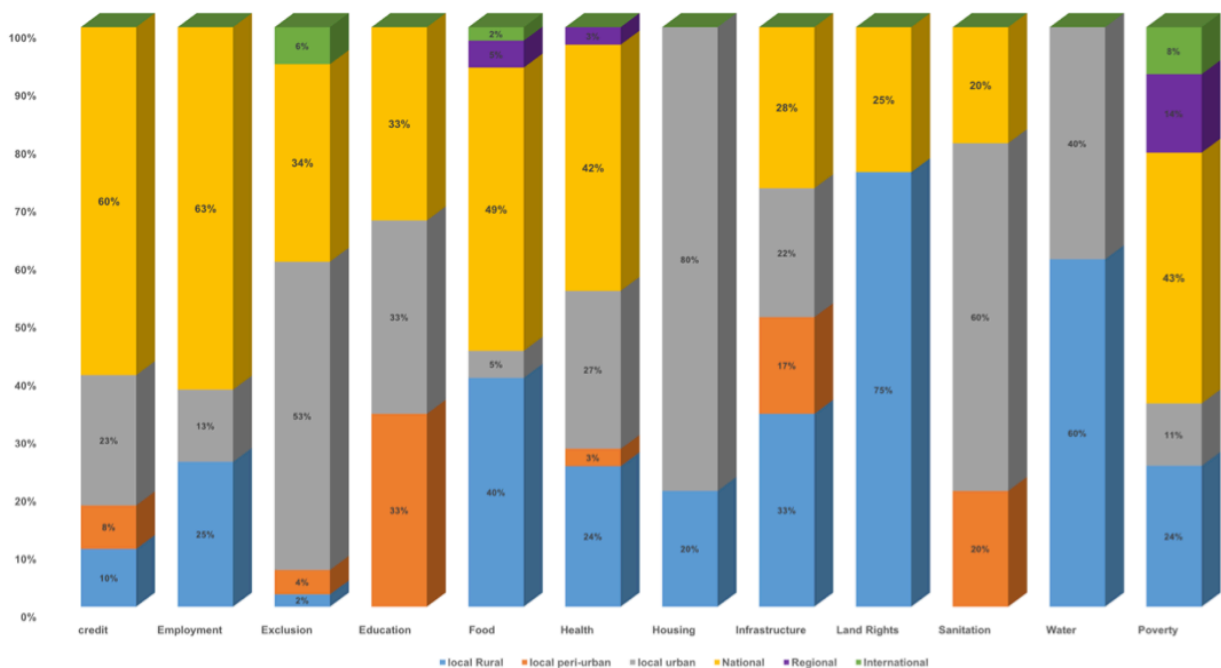


Fig 20: Geographical distribution of issues on radio

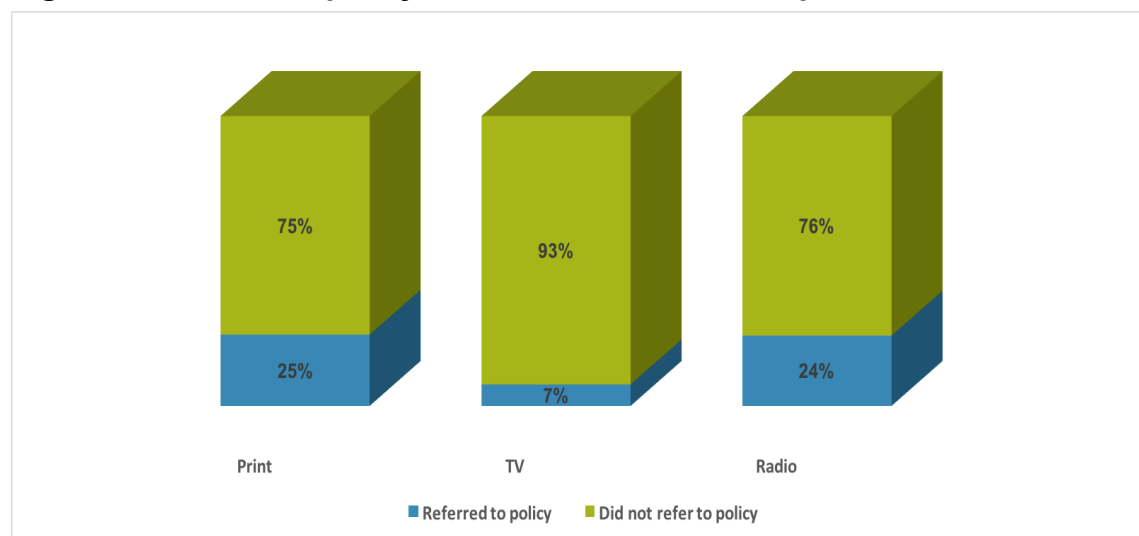


2.19 Policy review and analysis

Although there was some reference to policy in the articles, only 19 percent of news reports made some reference to policy, as compared to the other 81 percent that made no references to policy. Citing national and regional policies and legal reference gives weight to a news article, particularly because news reports can influence policy through holding government accountable for its obligations to its citizens. ZTV reports made the least reference to policy in its reports, as only seven percent of its reports made such references. Print media had the highest number of references to policy.

The trend with media houses in reporting poverty is therefore on two extremes – in the first instance, where a media house reports on local news, there is little policy analysis and where a medium reports on generic, national level issues, there is more policy analysis, but no links with local level programmes. This compounds the lack of horizontal and vertical linkages in the stories. Reporting therefore becomes fragmented, as policy is not linked to programmes on the ground.

Fig 21: Reference to policy on the monitored media platforms



Policies mentioned in the monitored reports

Poverty indicator	Reference made to Policy, legislation, international and regional instruments on poverty
Lack of education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) • Presidential Scholarship Scheme • National Constitution
Lack of food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drought relief Programme • Feed Africa • Food Deficit Mitigation Strategy • School feeding Scheme
Exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT Policy

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Nations Convention on the Rights of People Living with Disability • SADC minimum standards for good prison health • Ministry of Health Policy on Discrimination
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Constitution • Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Policy • Cooperatives Act • Operation Garikai/ Hlalani Kuhle • Operation Murambatsvina • Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET)
Lack of employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour Act • July 17, 2015 supreme Court ruling on retrenchments • National Financial Inclusion Strategy
Lack of water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Act • National Constitution • National Irrigation Scheme
Sanitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste Management By-Laws
Poor Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ending AIDS by 2030 • ZIMASSET
General Poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty Reduction Strategy

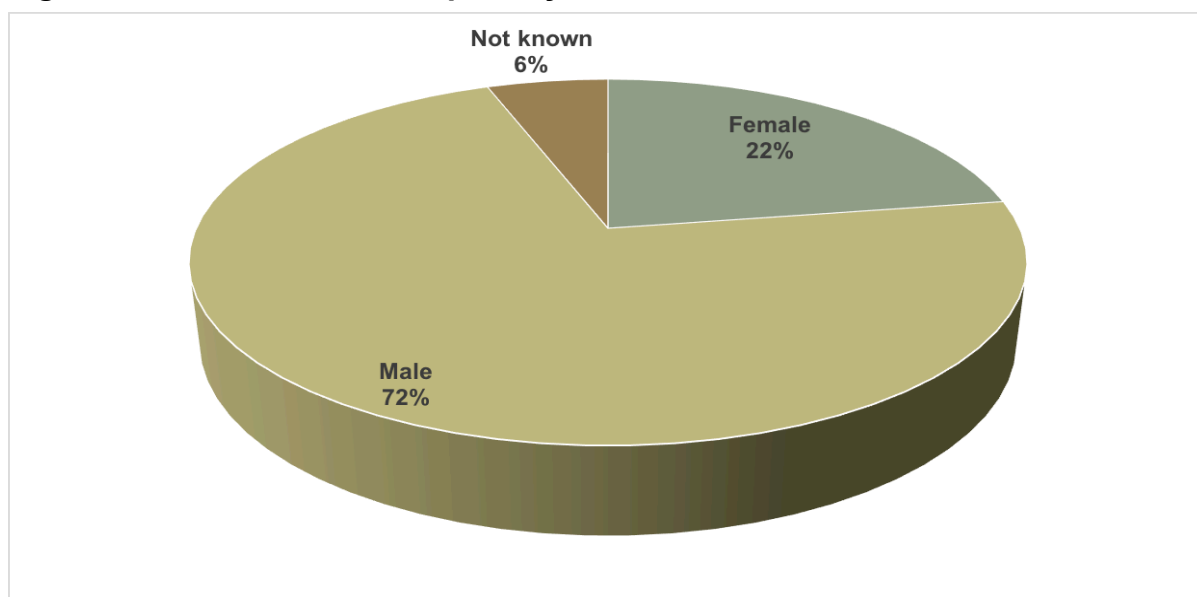
3.0 Chapter Three: Who made the news?

3.1 Who features in poverty related stories?

Women’s voices in the news reports on poverty were distinctly lower at 22 percent as compared to those of men, at 72 percent. There were also more images of men who appeared in 63 percent of photographs as compared to women who appeared in the remaining 37 percent. Poverty is a phenomenon that affects most Zimbabweans; however, women are significantly worse affected. Various reports, particularly income-based surveys have revealed that women have significantly lower incomes than men, a key indicator of poverty levels. The 2011 Demographic and Health Survey for example noted that fewer married women are employed as compared to married men (44 vs 84 percent) and when they are employed they earn less than men.⁹ Since gender disaggregated statistics on poverty show that women are worse affected, it would be expected that women would actually speak more on a phenomenon that affects them.

This trend is however not exclusive to poverty reporting. A report produced by the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ), *Who makes the news in Zimbabwe?* in 2015, showed that women make up an average of 25 percent of newsmakers in news reports. Men and women are affected in different ways by poverty, regardless of what aspect it is, from accessing food, housing, employment, water, credit, among other issues. A gendered assessment of the impact of poverty on men and women would therefore give a better understanding of poverty that gives clearer indications on how this can be mitigated.

Fig 22: Voice distribution on poverty related issues

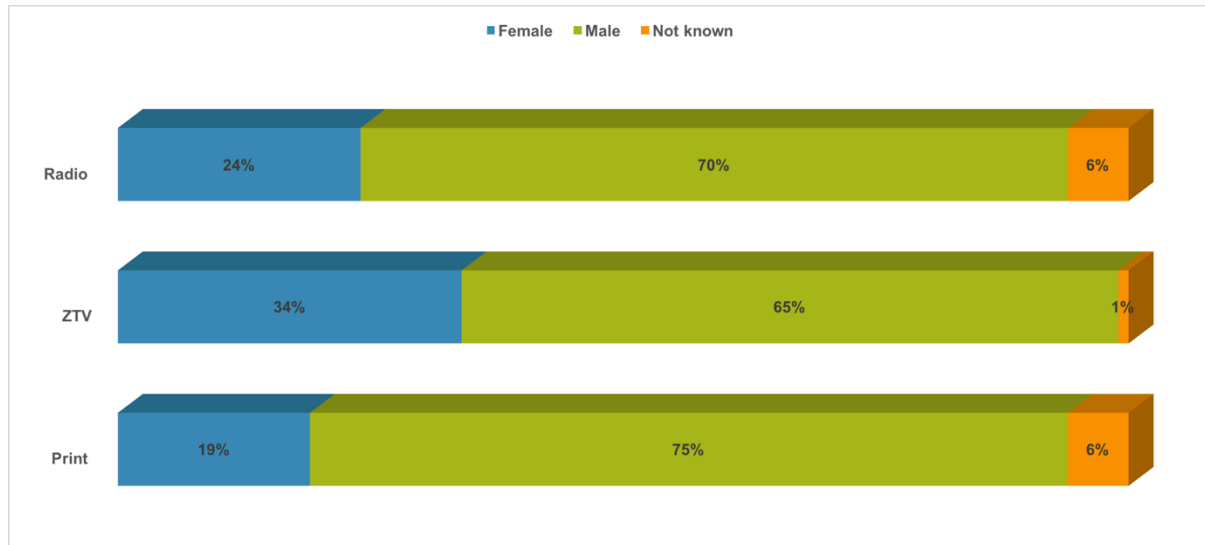


⁹ Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey 2010 – 2011, Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, Harare

3.2 Voice distribution per medium

ZTV had the highest percent average of women sources, although this was only 34 percent followed by radio and print, which had the lowest figure.

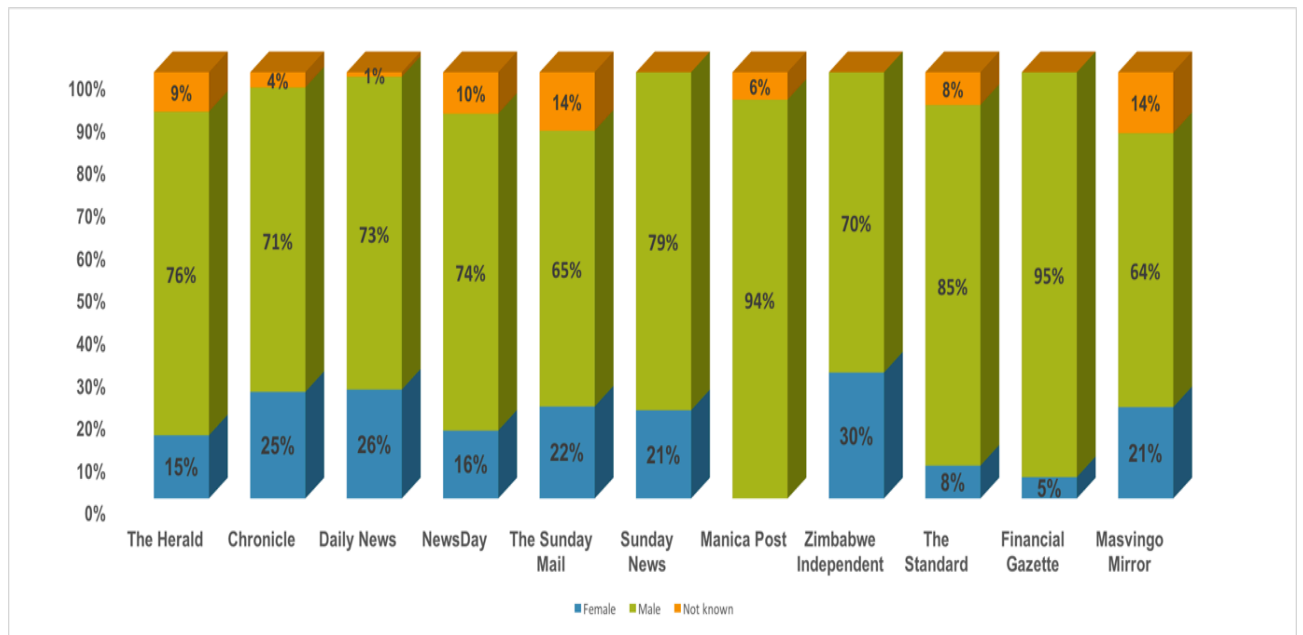
Fig 23: Gender distribution of voices per medium



3.3 Who speaks in print media?

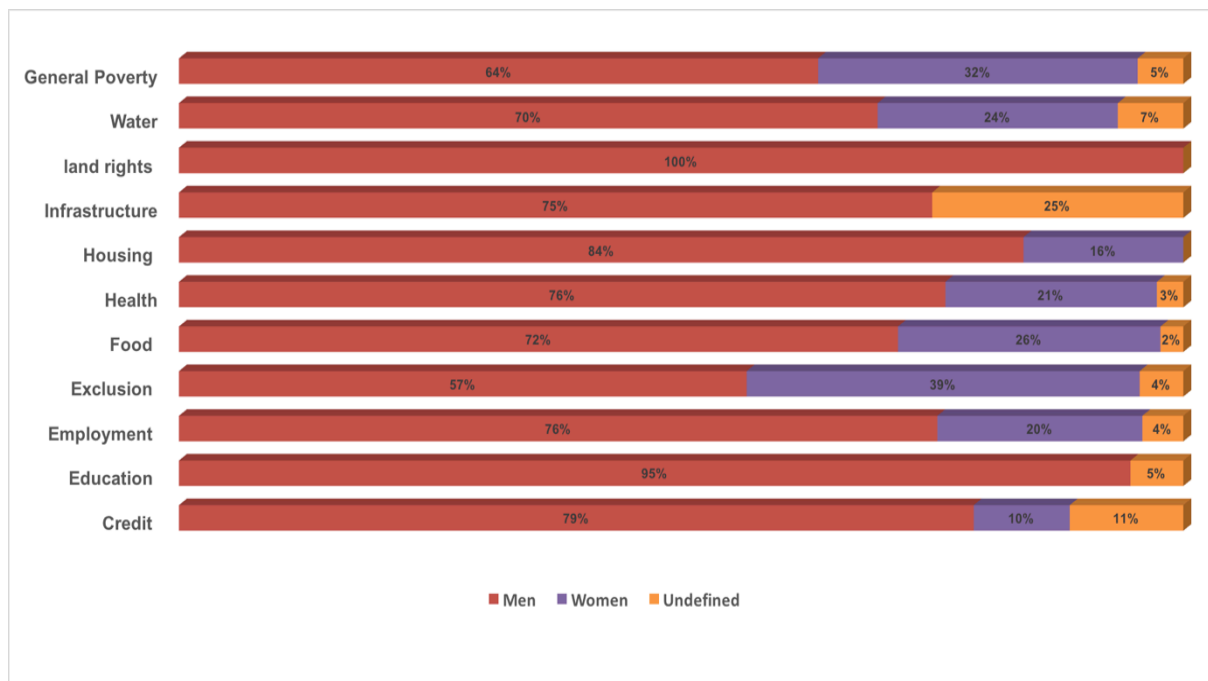
Men’s voices far overshadowed those of women in the newspapers monitored. 75.2 percent of the quoted sources were men, as compared to the 18.7 percent of female sources. It is ironic that although there are more women affected by poverty, there are fewer women who actually speak on the issue. While on average, newspapers featured low numbers of women, the *Manica Post*, which publishes in the Eastern part of Zimbabwe, had no women at all quoted in the news reports published during the monitoring period, while the *Zimbabwe Independent* had the highest percentage voices of women at 30 percent.

Fig 24: Distribution of men and women’s voices in the print media



In the various categories monitored, the highest percentage of female voices were speaking on social exclusion, general poverty; however women’s voices were completely missing from stories on land rights, infrastructure and education.

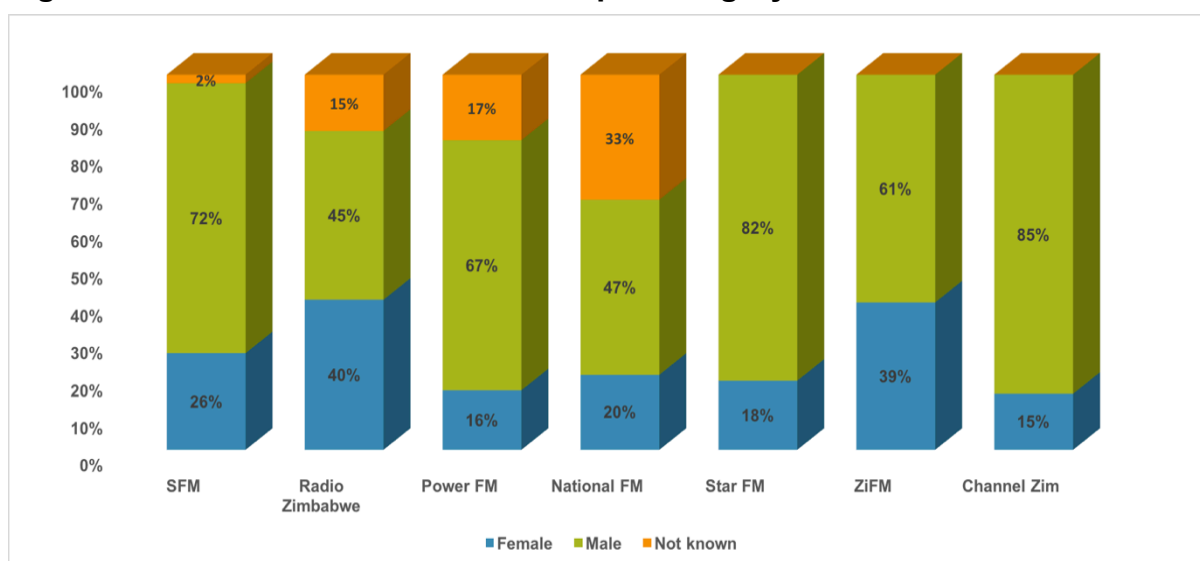
Fig 25: Gender distribution of sources per category in the print media



3.4 Who speaks on radio?

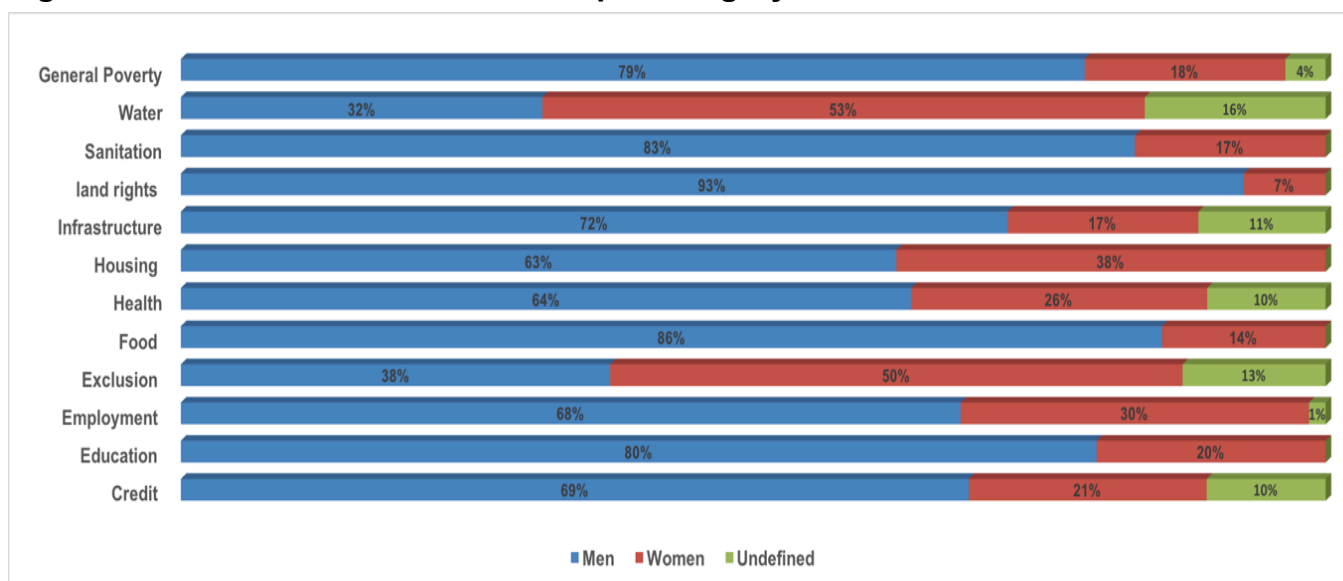
Of the 426 sources quoted on radio, women were quoted 23.5 percent of the time, while men’s voices made up 70.2 percent of quoted sources. Radio Zimbabwe had the highest percentage female sources with 40 percent speaking on the station, as compared to 45 percent men. Channel Zim had the lowest percentage of women’s voices with only 15 percent.

Fig 26: Gender distribution of sources per category on radio



Within the specific categories, there was a higher percentage of women’s voices as compared to men on issues of lack of access to water and social exclusion, but a very low percentage on land rights.

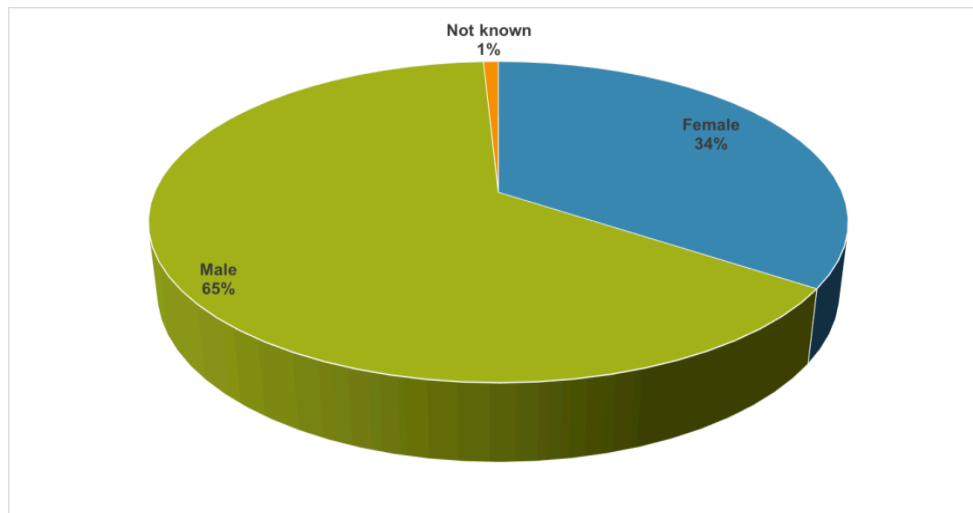
Fig 27: Gender distribution of sources per category on radio



3.5 Who speaks on television?

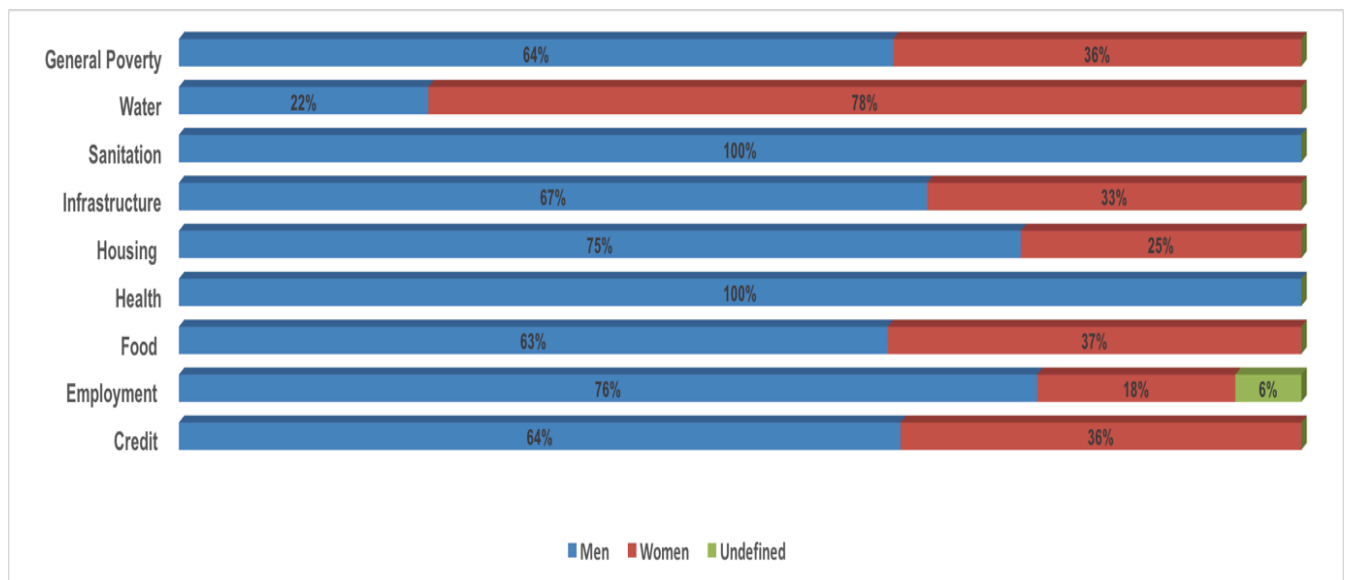
Television had the highest percentage women’s voices, with women making up 34 percent of the 122 sources on ZTV.

Fig 28: Distribution of voices on ZTV by gender



There was a significantly higher percentage of female sources quoted in stories on access to water, as women made 78 percent of quoted sources, although there were no female sources quoted on general sanitation and health matters.

Fig 29: Source distribution per category on ZTV



3.6 Source occupation on poverty reporting

Official voices were the majority of sources quoted in stories on poverty, effectively speaking on behalf of the affected population. As the table below shows, elected officials made up the majority of sources, followed by government employees. In

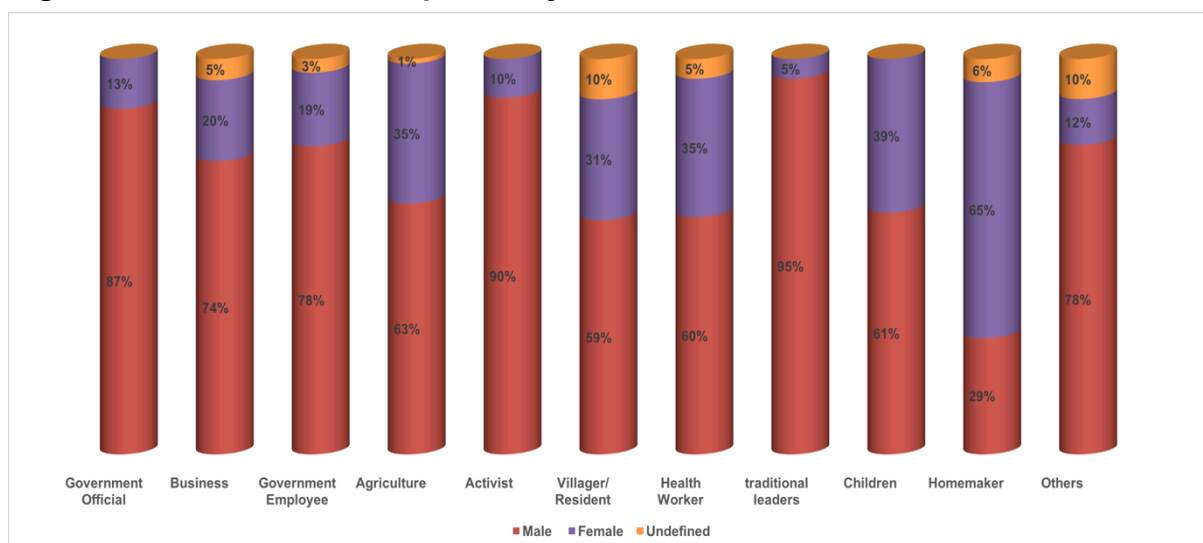
general, the various stories did not go beyond the policy headline. Most stories were based on an action, speech or policy pronouncement by an official without any additional analysis of the issues involved. There was little follow up or ground checks made by the media to see whether the pronouncement made was followed up with what was on the ground therefore the effectiveness of these policies could not be ascertained.

Fig 30: Source distribution by occupation

Rank	Occupation	Number of sources
1	Elected Officials	252
2	Government employees	128
3	Agriculture, mining, fishing and forestry	121
4	Business People	112
5	Activists	93
6	Villagers / Residents	62
7	Artisans	42
8	Homemaker	33
9	Health expert	32
10	Not Stated	31

65 percent of homemakers quoted were women as compared to only 13 percent female government sources. This presents a perspective that women are mostly found at home and not in public places, and men make the decisions that will eventually affect women on poverty related policies. Women tended to be cast as victims of a policy or in other negative roles – all sex workers and criminals for example quoted in print media in poverty stories were women.

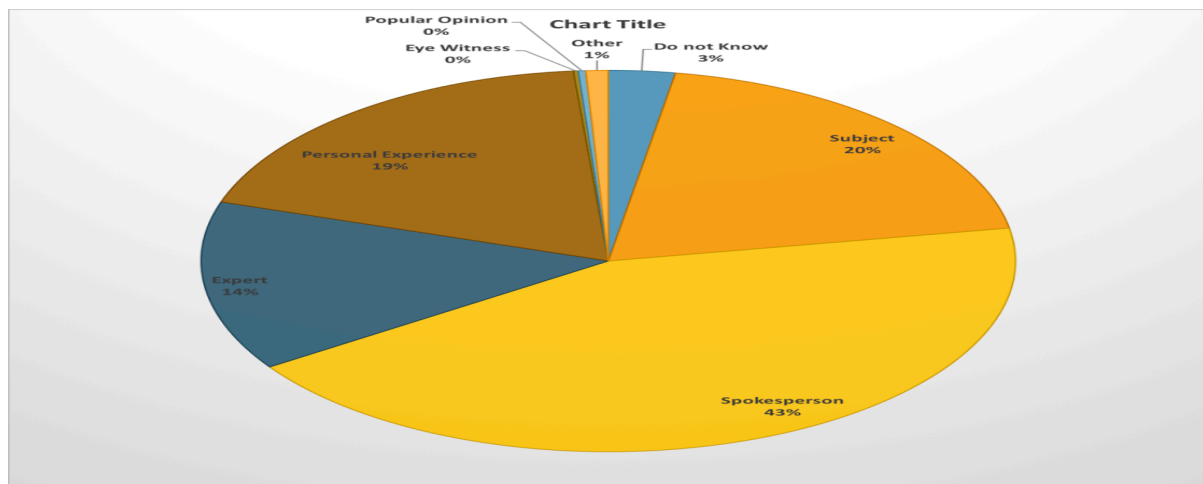
Fig 31: Distribution of occupation by sex



3.7 What roles did subjects play in the stories on poverty?

Only 19 percent of people featured in the stories on poverty spoke of their personal experience with poverty. 43 percent of those featured were official sources, mostly government representatives, quoted talking about the country's state of affairs in different sectors of the economy.

Fig 32: Sources' function in the story



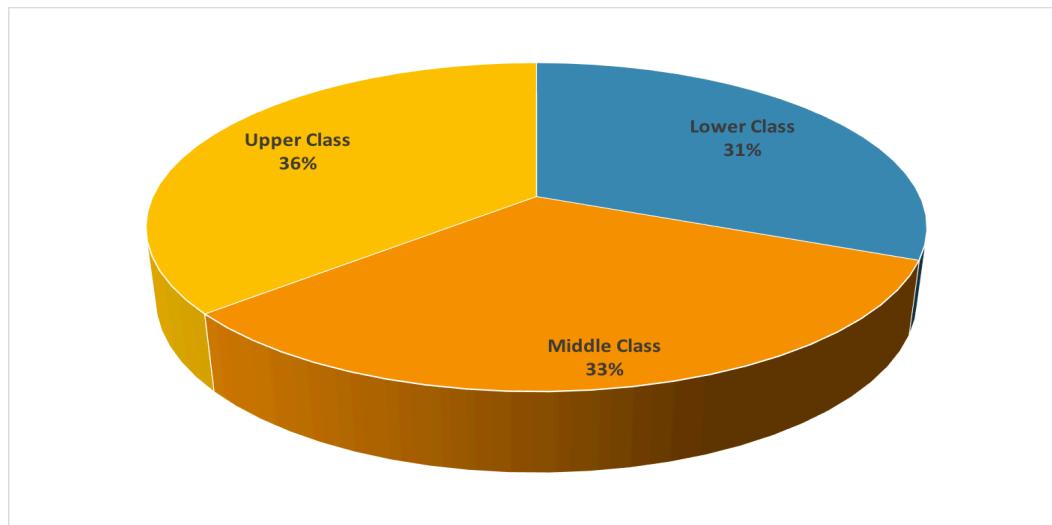
3.8 Distribution of news sources and subjects by socio-economic class

This study distinguished three socio-economic classes of people who were featured in poverty related news: upper class, middle class and lower class.

1. The upper class was made up of the country's influential figures who included; politicians, government officials, business people, traditional leaders and foreign dignitaries.
2. The middle class was made up of experts in various fields and civil servants, they included; activists, health workers, artisans and media professionals.
3. The lower class was made up of people with little or no influence in society, they included; villagers, residents, sex workers, homemakers, children and students.

Overall, there was a slightly even distribution of voices belonging to the different socio-economic classes though the upper class was featured in the majority of stories.

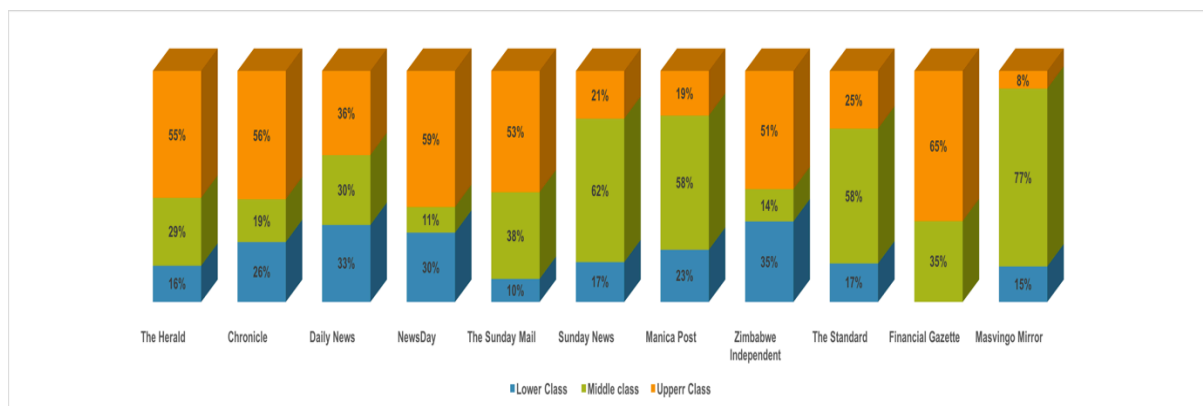
Fig 33: Socio-economic class of sources quoted on poverty related issues



3.9 Representation of socio-economic class in the print media

The upper class was featured the most in print media, with 45 percent of all voice

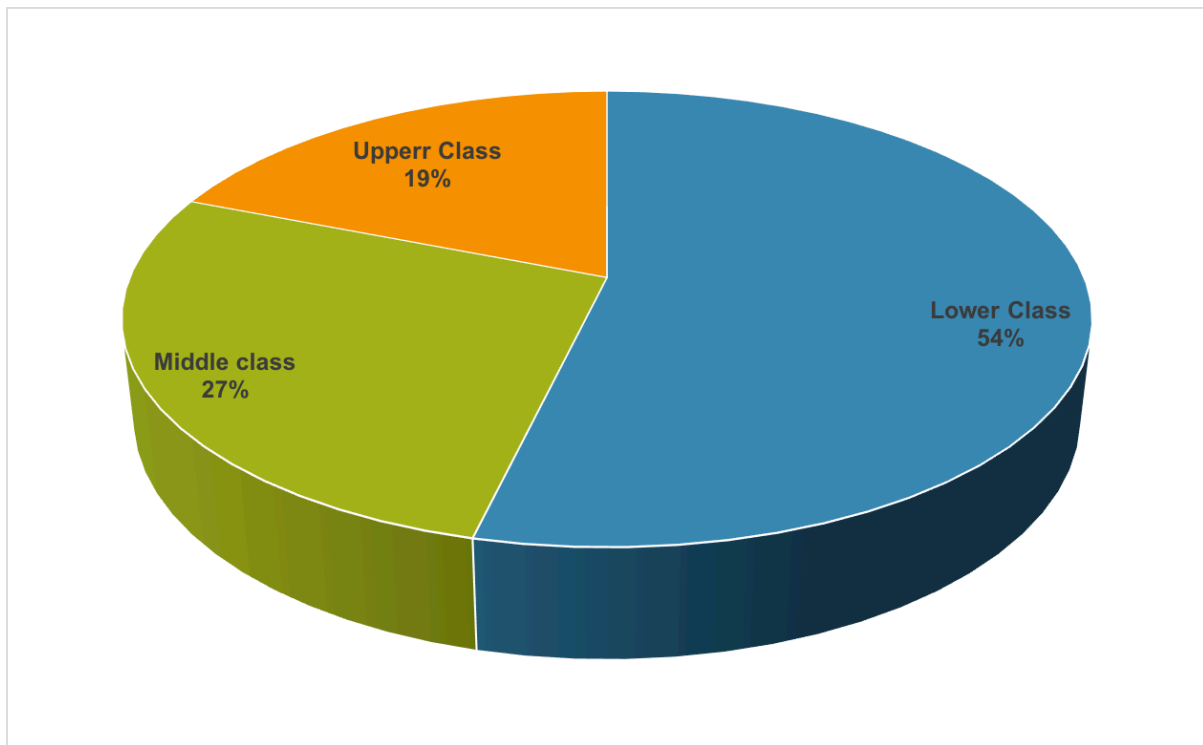
Fig 34: Distribution of voices by socio-economic class in the print media



3.10 Representation of socio-economic class on television

Television featured the most number of people classified in the lower class in news reports, with 54 percent of sources as poor people seemed to be speaking more on issues that affected them.

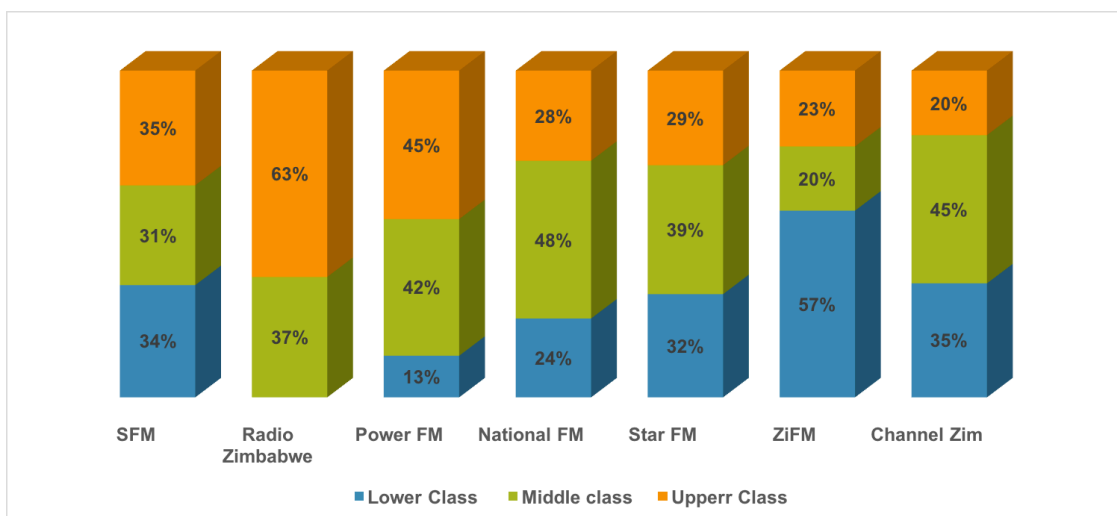
Fig 35: Distribution of voices by socio-economic class on ZTV



3.11 Representation of socio-economic class on radio

Radio had a relatively evenly balanced distribution of voices among the three socio-economic classes, although this varied across radio stations. The lower middle class was featured 36 percent of the time, followed by the lower class featured 32.1 percent of the time and the upper class featuring in 31.9 percent of the reports

Fig 36: Distribution of voices by socio-economic class on radio

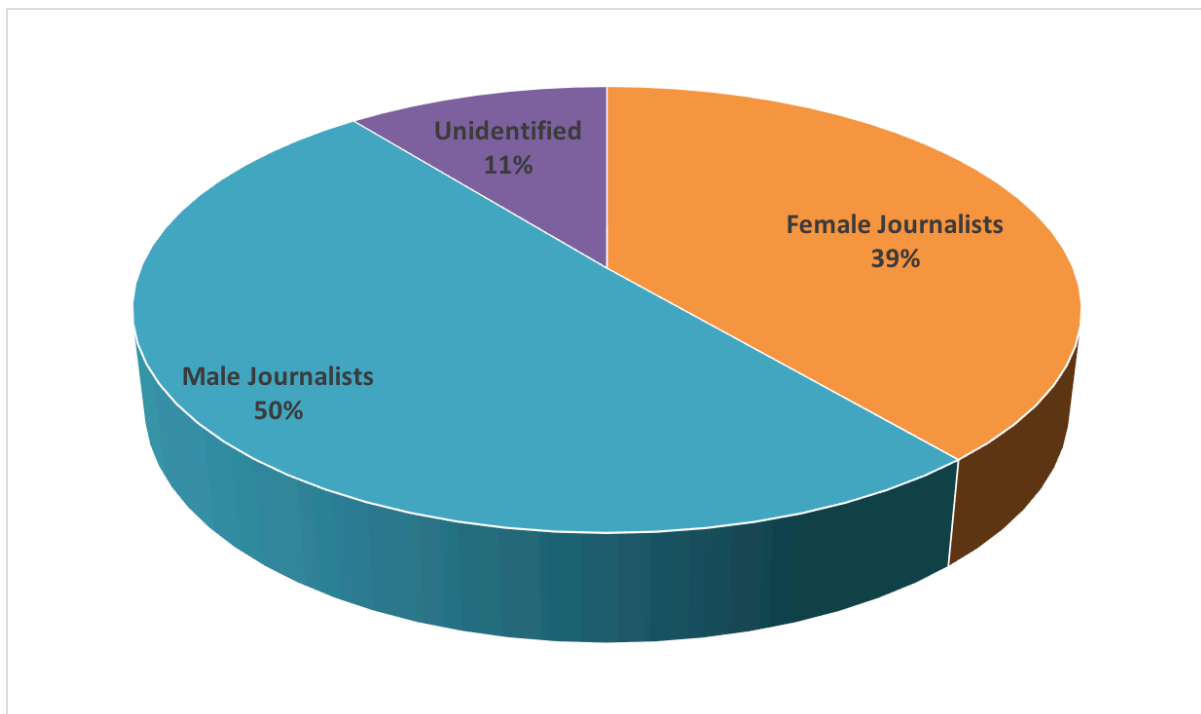


3.12 Who is writing on poverty?

There does not seem to be any specialized reporting on poverty during the monitoring period. There is no record that any of the newsrooms identify this as a special case and have devoted specialized resources towards this, in terms of skills development.

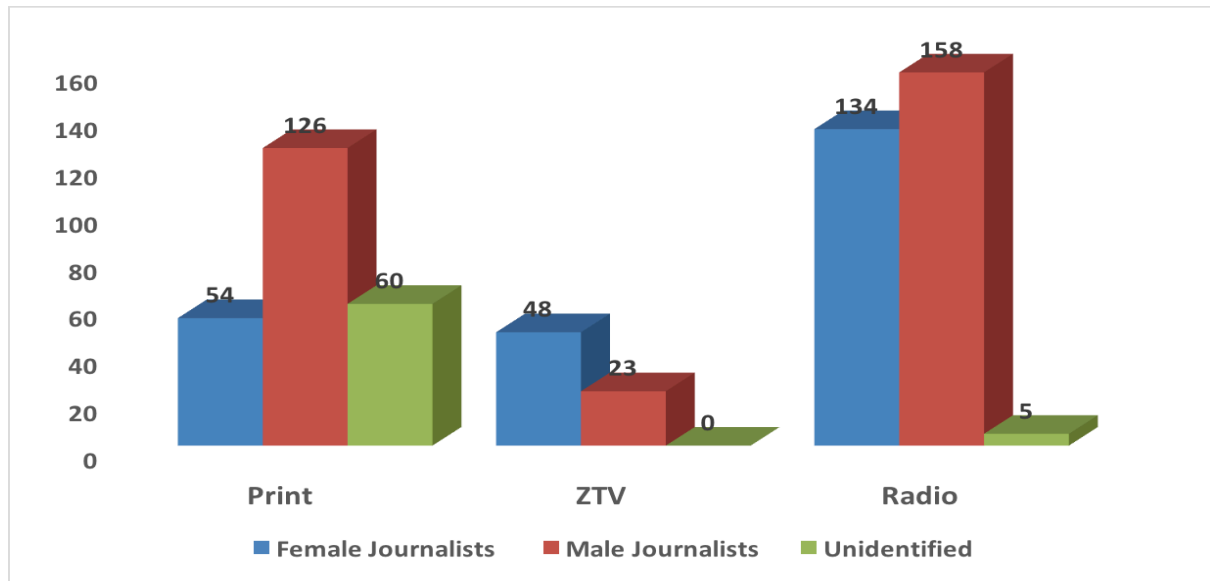
In addition, gender dynamics in the newsrooms are shown with the higher number of male journalists writing more on poverty than their female counterparts. Male journalists accounted for 50 percent of the reports whilst female reporters wrote 39 percent of the stories on poverty related issues. The identity of the remaining 11 percent was not shown.

Fig 37: Sex of journalists who wrote on poverty



Male journalists were dominant in the print media and on radio whilst female journalists covered the most stories on poverty on TV. In the print media, a sizeable number of reports on poverty were written by unidentified journalists. The print media accounted for 92,3 percent of the reports in which the reporter was not identified. The gender distribution of the journalists is highlighted in the graph below.

Fig 38: Gender distribution journalists who wrote on poverty per medium



In the electronic media, journalists play numerous roles to disseminate news on poverty related issues. In 76,7 percent of the reports that were carried by the broadcast media, an anchor reported the news on the various poverty related subjects. Field reporters contributed to 21, 7 percent of the reports. The remaining, 1.6 percent was covered by other media personnel.

4.0 Chapter Four: Poverty Reporting and Journalistic Practice

4.1 Stereotypes

The media can contribute to adding to or dispelling any stereotypes that prejudice people living in conditions of poverty. Ideally they, in the public interest, should challenge the portrayal of women as victims of poverty, the view that people living in poverty are dependent, desperate and gullible or that they lack innovation to overturn their fortunes.

4.2 Gender and representation

The representation of women and men in the stories showed how the media stereotypes women and men within certain roles. Generally, men were shown in images that showed them in positions of authority while the women are the victims of poverty. This perpetuated unfavourable stereotypes about women and poverty as it gives the impression that women are not actively involved in the fight against poverty. Some stereotypical representations are shown below.

4.3.1 “Powerful men” crafting solutions to Zimbabwe’s poverty crisis

The portrayal of men in many of the stories featured, especially in print media showed men in positions of authority speaking on poverty. These men in positions of authority are seen offering solutions to poverty alleviation in the country. The highlighted stories below show President Mugabe discussing the harnessing of water bodies to boost agricultural production. Dr. Made is seen in the second featured article speaking on behalf of the President. While these positive representations on men are applauded, the representation of women shows a different picture.

Ministry ordered to exploit all water bodies

From George Maponga in CHIREDZI

PRESIDENT Mugabe has directed that the Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development Ministry dispatches experts countrywide to examine existing water bodies that can be immediately rehabilitated and provide water for irrigation to boost food security following recurrent droughts.

Zimbabwe is currently battling severe food deficit that has left more than 4 million people in need of assistance.

Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development Minister Dr Joseph Made, on Friday said President Mugabe directed that all water bodies be harnessed as part of home-grown solutions to improve food supply situation.

Speaking at Triangle sugar estates in Chiredzi at the official handover of over 1 300 tonnes of maize to Government that was grown by Tongaat Hulett on its cane fields under the winter maize project, Dr Made said Government was targeting A2 farmers countrywide to take the benefits

who will use the water for irrigation purposes. We will of course appeal to these A2 farmers to prioritise the production of wheat and maize because they are very critical crops," added Dr Made.

He said Government would assist the A2 farmers with machinery and other equipment to capacitate them.

He said Zimbabwe had several agricultural support facilities with countries such as China, Brazil and India among others that would see mainly A2 farmers getting equipment and other machinery to boost productivity on farms.

"We will give the A2 farmers machinery, agricultural equipment and inputs for them to fully use water bodies near them but the assistance will not be for free. That is why we will not force the farmers to grow a certain type of crop though we will appeal to them to prioritise maize and wheat," he said.

Dr Made challenged Parliamentarians and traditional leaders among other community leaders to help in the identification of water bodies in



President Mugabe

that we have in this country to grow maize in winter, the challenge was presented to us as the technical people and we must pursue that to see how best it can be done," he added.

He challenged more local farm-

Hulett winter maize project) was an experiment following a request from Government and my appeal to Tongaat Hulett is that may you continue with this project into the future and help ease the food shortages currently facing the country. It is very good that this maize was grown locally, which means we can provide solutions to our own problems as a country," added Dr Made.

In his address, Media, Information and Broadcasting Services Minister Dr Chris Mushohwe, also hailed Tongaat Hulett for successfully implementing project.

Dr Mushohwe urged Tongaat to maintain the winter maize project to alleviate food shortages in Masvingo.

"Our appeal to you (Tongaat Hulett) is that you must continue growing maize into the future to improve our food security and maybe even eventually allow the land that you are growing the maize to be taken over by the beneficiaries of the maize themselves in line with the land reform programme," he said.

Tongaat Hulett managing direc-

Sugar firm donates maize to Masvingo

From George Maponga in CHIREDZI

SUGAR producer Tongaat Hulett last Thursday handed over 1 300 tonnes of maize, produced under the winter maize project at its estates in the Lowveld to Government, boosting the food security situation in Masvingo province where over 700 000 people are in urgent need of food aid.

The handover of the maize followed the green light from President Mugabe for the Masvingo provincial leadership to start distributing the grain to families in the province.

The Masvingo provincial leadership wanted the maize to be handed over to President Mugabe for equal distribution to all the country's provinces on the grounds that it was a national project.

However, the President ordered that all the maize be distributed to ease crippling food shortages across Masvingo province.

Speaking after receiving the maize on behalf of President Mug-

abe at Triangle Estates yesterday, Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development Minister Dr Joseph Made said the maize was going to be equally shared among all the 26 constituencies in Masvingo province.

Dr Made said each constituency was going to receive 44 tonnes and urged the provincial drought relief committee to expedite its distribution to ease severe food shortages across Masvingo province.

"This maize should be speedily distributed to families who are in need of food without delay and my challenge to the provincial leadership is to make sure that people get this maize without further delay," he said.

"Government is bringing in more food to ease the prevailing food shortages so please my appeal to the leadership that will be responsible for distributing this maize is that do not hold on to it, give it to the people. Priority should be given to those families who were not getting any allocations from the Social Welfare



Dr Made

Department."

Dr Made said part of the maize was going to be kept at Tongaat Hulett for distribution by the provincial leadership to vulnerable members of the society such as orphans and the physically challenged among others.

Dr Made said Government was against the charging of maize grain transportation fee to poor villag-

ers.

ZANU-PF Secretary for Production Cde Josaya Hungwe thanked Tongaat Hulett for making good on its promise to grow winter maize following a request from Government.

Cde Hungwe said the move by Tongaat Hulett could be replicated by other companies in Zimbabwe and help the nation achieve food security at household level in line with its Zim-Asset goals.

Masvingo Provincial Affairs Minister Senator Shuvai Mahofa said it was refreshing that a Masvingo-based company, Tongaat Hulett, had managed to intervene to mitigate the effects of drought in Masvingo. Tongaat Hulett planted short season variety winter maize on 329 hectares in May last year and the crop was harvested in October of the same year.

The firm employed 200 contract workers and assigned some of the experts to look after the crop that was irrigated using power generated from the company's sugar mill at Triangle.

4.3.2 Women are "victims" of poverty

While men are represented as solution holders to poverty alleviation, women are depicted mostly as victims of poverty. The caption from the ... newspaper below shows a picture of "unidentified women" walking past a heap of rubbish. Not only

are the women unidentified and nameless, but they are also the picture of the “residents” who are affected by poor service delivery.



4.3.3 Food aid the “only” solution to drought

The general picture observed in the media’s reports on shortage of food was that Zimbabwean citizens were helpless in the face of drought and El Nino. Most of the reports were on the handouts being awarded to citizens by humanitarian organisations and corporates. Most of the reports did not give sustainable solutions to the drought issue that has affected the country. In one of ZTV’s reports with the headline, *Tongaat Hulett donates maize to Masvingo province*, the television station noted that, “*The company’s CEO, Mr. Sydney Mutsambiwa said the donation is in response to an appeal by the government after this year’s drought*”. The report cites food donations as the main strategy being used by government to avert the food shortages in the country.

At a broader level, some news reports showed how the local media has taken on Western representations of Africa as being in need of food aid. The impression is of a helpless continent that cannot feed itself. The language used in the story “US to feed half a million Zimbabweans until October after the drought” that appeared in *The Zimbabwe Independent* was one such example. The story, pulled from Reuters news agency gives a Westernised perspective to food aid in Zimbabwe. It shows a picture of helpless Zimbabweans being “fed” by the Americans, which is patronizing and paternalistic. Why this story was carried in this way, when the newspaper actually has its own reporters on the ground is not clear.

When these donations happen, there is no follow-up with the intended beneficiaries. Some of the stories read like PR pieces on companies' corporate responsibility programmes with no verification of whether the donations were actually made, reached the intended beneficiaries nor the impact they have had in actually alleviating hunger and the shortage of food. In its watchdog role, the media is expected to question, and verify to determine accuracy of press releases or statements on implemented programmes.

4.3.4 Poverty breeds desperation and gullibility

There were also some reports, which showed how poor people are easy to manipulate. During the monitoring period there were reports on Zimbabwean women who were victims of human trafficking after falling for an employment scam, which led to their enslavement in Kuwait where they worked as maids and sex slaves. This practice was denounced in the local media particularly on Spot FM (18/4) which warned Zimbabweans that, "modern day slavery is as real as in the old times and Kuwait is the hub for employment seeking girls". Women who had been victims of this scam were given space to recount their ordeal on radio. They also appeared before parliament, which resulted in the Zimbabwean government taking up the issue with the Kuwait government.

4.3.5 "Sex work", poverty and children

A dimension widely explored by the media was on the abuse of young girls who had been "forced" into "sex work" by poverty. There were continued references to "child commercial sex workers". Star FM reported that, "*Child commercial sex workers lament abuse from clients*". The use of the term child commercial sex workers itself is not challenged. There is an assumption that girls firstly can actually make decisions to go into sex work. The abusive men in the article are actually referred to as "clients" and the story fails to analyse the criminal nature of sex work involving children. This kind of language sanitizes the recruitment of young girls into sex work. Poverty was also cited as one of the drivers forcing young girls into sex work since they have "limited options for survival".

5.0 Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations

In monitoring the media's coverage of poverty related issues Media Monitors observed that even though poverty is a critical issue that affects the majority of Zimbabweans and has an acute impact on the development of the country, the subject made up an insignificant percentage of the monitored media's total coverage as there was no structured reporting on poverty as a news subject. Poverty reporting took a backseat to issues like politics, business, entertainment and sport, which have specific sections or segments in the different media platforms that were monitored. While the above mentioned beats help sustain the media houses financially it is reporting on bread and butter issues like poverty that makes the media relevant to their audience.

Based on the results of the monitoring, Media Monitors makes the following recommendations.

- That the local mainstream media allocate more space and time to stories on the plight of people living with poverty and sustainable solutions to alleviate poverty.
- The media should put more analysis in their reports and make reference to national policy so as to raise their audience's awareness of their rights and government's obligations to them as well as to hold government accountable for its actions.
- Journalists should make a progressive effort to link related poverty issues so
- That they present a comprehensive picture of the poverty situation in the country. They should also interpret for the public how national level developments have an impact on what happens at district level.
- The media should widen the geographical scope of their coverage to ensure their stories are more proportionally representative and relevant to their audience.
- Since the issue of poverty is so diverse, the media should not generalise its coverage since this results in many issues being missed.
- Journalists should take a more humane approach to reporting poverty by factoring in the plight of victims of poverty in their reports.
- Government should license more community based news outlets (both print and electronic) so that citizens can access poverty related news that is relevant to their communities.
- Different central and local government departments should give journalists access to information on their poverty alleviation initiatives so that members of

the public have adequate information on what the country's leadership is doing for them.

- Media Monitors noted that most of the anti-poverty campaigns that received publicity in Zimbabwe's mainstream media were led by international organisations. It is therefore imperative for local anti-poverty initiatives to engage the media so that their initiatives get publicity.
- As the direct beneficiaries of poverty related news, members of the public should demand access to sources of news that specifically document their plight and afford them an opportunity speak on the various poverty related subjects.

Ends/

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