

News roundup

What works’ in HIV and AIDS and the world of work

The HSRC is currently developing a niche research area, in partnership with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), related to wellness in the workplace with a special focus on HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa.

Professor Nancy Phaswana-Mafuya, a research director in HIV/AIDS, STIs and TB programme at the HSRC, explained that a 10-African country study by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), in which South Africa participated, provided verifiable, quantifiable and measurable documented evidence of ‘what works’ in running successful HIV and AIDS workplace programmes across the 10 participating countries. But because only eight South African workplaces were included, it was considered necessary to expand the South African component of this study.

The current three-year study (2015 – 2017) targets a total of 40 workplaces. The aim is to provide lessons derived from the successful experiences of workplaces (large and small, formal and informal, public, civil and private sectors, across various economic sectors) that can be adapted and transferred to benefit other workplaces.

These lessons can become instructive in how workplaces could become more effective and efficient in their response to HIV and AIDS within their own particular and unique situations. Documenting and disseminating good workplace practices will provide the basis for policy development, recommendations for scalable interventions and publications in peer-reviewed journals.

The Department of Labour (DoL) is a collaborating partner in this research project. The Final Report documenting the results of these projects will be presented during the second half of 2017.

Categories	Frequency (n=25)
Years of operation	
1-10 years	4
11-20 years	2
21+ years	14
Unknown	5
Size of workplace	
Small	3
Medium	2
Large	20
Type of workplace	
Public	3
Medium	2
Large	20
Type of sector	
Manufacturing	8
General government services	5
Personal services	4
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	2
Transport, storage and communication	2
Mining and quarrying	1
Construction	1
Wholesale, retail and motor trade; catering and accommodation	1
Finance, real estate and business services	1
Provinces	
Gauteng	8
KwaZulu-Natal	8
Eastern Cape	6
Northern Cape	2
Free State	1
Length of workplace programmes	
1-5 years	3
6-10 years	2
16-20 years	4
20+ years	2
Unknown	14
Type of workplace programmes	
Wellness/comprehensive/inclusive approach	19
HIV programme only	6
Programme implementation	
Use of both internal and external consultants	18
Use only external consultants	7

How the SABC failed the public in its coverage of the 2016 local government election



Protests against the SABS's editorial policies.
Credit: Tariro Washinyira/GroundUp

The coverage of the 2016 local government election by the South Africa Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) failed the public, say *Tula Dlamini*, *Sarah Chiumbu* and *Lien Molobela*, who have analysed the SABC news reporting from a period of four weeks leading up to the election on 3 August 2016.

The analysis concluded that the SABC’s coverage was characterised by overwhelming bias in favour of accredited national leaders at the expense of local candidates and the electorate; a greater focus on personalities and conflict rather than electoral issues; poor representability of women actors; and a glaring urban/rural divide.

Our study examined the extent to which the SABC fulfilled its mandate as outlined in its Editorial Charter and in regulations by the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA).

The basis for the study

The SABC Editorial Charter enjoins the public broadcaster to offer a plurality of views and a variety of news, information

and analysis. ICASA’s role is to keep the SABC in check and evaluate whether the broadcaster is fulfilling its public service responsibilities and complying with its charter.

The study evaluated the content of the broadcasts in terms of journalistic norms, values and practices that are rooted within the public sphere notion. The concept of the public sphere popularised by Jurgen Habermas (1989) was used as shorthand to analyse processes of media participation and deliberation in democratic societies.

In this situation, public service media, ideally operating between market and state, become an important site for deliberation and participation. Conceptually, the SABC – owing to its public service broadcasting (PSB)

mandate – must be considered in terms of the public sphere notion.

Drawing on findings from a quantitative and thematic content analysis of news bulletins covering a four-week period leading up to the local government elections on 3 August 2016, the study concluded that the SABC failed to meet this public service obligation in several areas.

Specified categories that appeared in the sampled SABC news bulletins were coded quantitatively, revealing which issues were highlighted or ignored, while the qualitative method used thematic content analysis to interpret meaning from the content of text data and to extract some key themes and frames from the news bulletins. Particular attention was paid to the daily main evening 18:30 news on SABC 3.

The work of journalism, particularly public service broadcasting, ought to go beyond the mere reproduction of events, and focus on constructing the news in a way that speaks to public good.

Key findings

Elite dominance and exclusion of local candidates

The SABC, as a public broadcaster, is expected to play a key role in profiling candidates running for office and providing the audience with information on these candidates. However, the SABC gave prominence to the national political leaders of the three main parties – Jacob Zuma (African National Congress), Mmusi Maimane (Democratic Alliance)

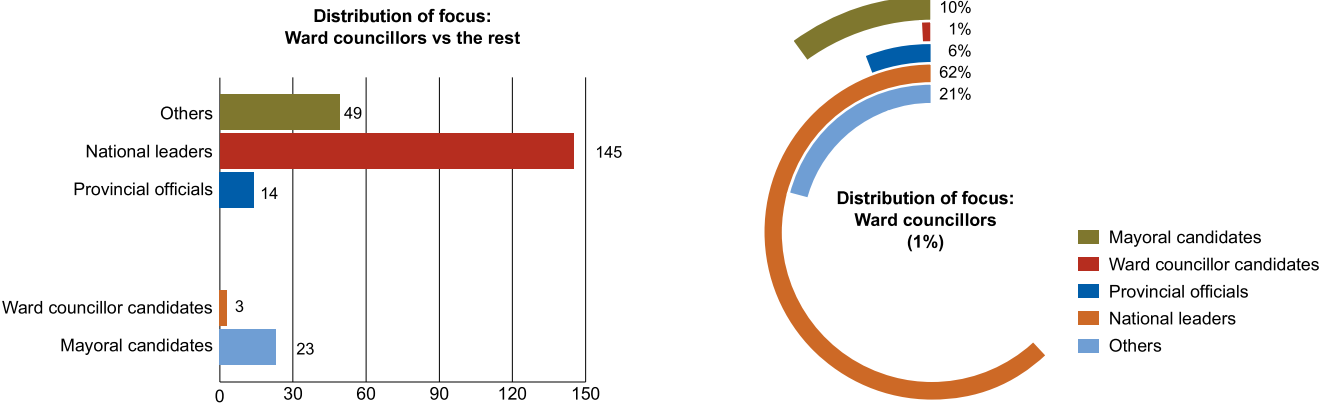
and Julius Malema (Economic Freedom Fighters) and mayoral candidates of the major metros – thereby limiting exposure of rank and file members, specifically the contesting ward councillors, the actual focus of the local elections.

There was also an absence of information and frames for understanding what the election was about. In a number of reports, the quoted news bite was no more than a call to vote for one political party rather than the other; and, worse,

the stories lacked contextualisation of the merits or demerits of the choices on offer.

This was a fundamental defect, for the work of journalism, particularly public service broadcasting, ought to go beyond the mere reproduction of events, and focus on constructing the news in a way that speaks to public good. Figure 1 shows that 62% of news coverage was given to national leaders, with only 1% going to councillors, the most important people in local democracy and service delivery.

Fig 1 Dominance of national leaders at the expense of local candidates
Source: HSRC, 2016



Dominance of politically driven stories

The ICASA Act discourages broadcasters during elections from relying on political parties as their sources for information; calling on them rather

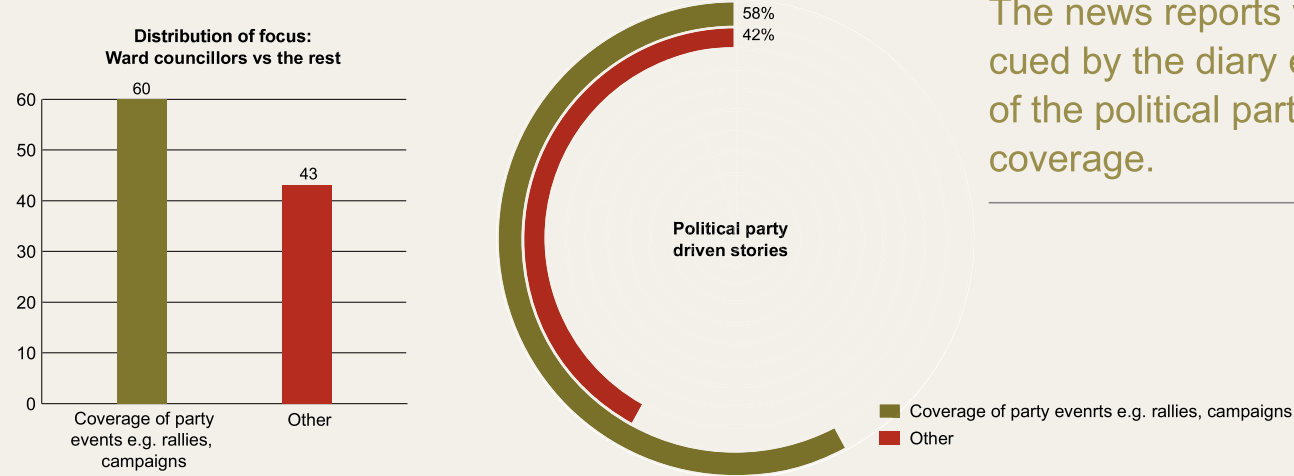
to ‘actively seek out information’.

ICASA argues that a ‘failure to do so will give parties with greater resources inequitable amounts of news coverage’. However, of the 103 sampled bulletins, nearly two-thirds (58%) of

the news stories (see Figure 2) featured party-political events such as rallies, campaigns and press conferences.

In other words, the news reports were cued by the diary events of the political party in coverage.

Fig 2 Political party driven stories
Source: HSRC, 2016



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Personalisation and conflict frames

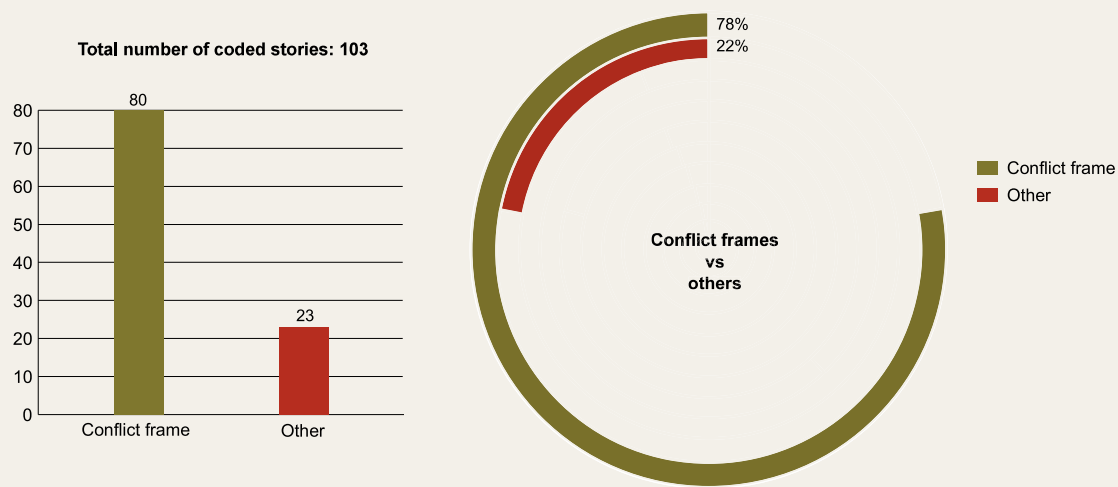
Election campaigns are among the most contentious events in the political life of a democratic country and over the years they have undergone significant changes. Scholars describe these transformations using concepts like *personalisation* and *spectacularisation*. The phenomenon is often intertwined with commercial broadcasting. This is

not the main responsibility of public service journalism during elections.

Public media are expected to transcend the logic of journalism in which competition and conflict news values are the dominant blueprint and it is their responsibility to scrutinise the political leaders and hold them to account for their statements.

The study found that the SABC was preoccupied with the search for conflict, characterised by a focus on winning, contention and disagreement. When presented with an opportunity to choose a ‘news bite’ from a source, in most cases the broadcaster favoured the conflict frame. Of the total 103 sampled SABC news bulletins, only 22% did not contain the conflict frame (Figure 3).

Fig 3 Conflict frames
Source: HSRC, 2016



As Figure 4 shows, the majority of stories focused on personalisation at the expense of issue-based stories.

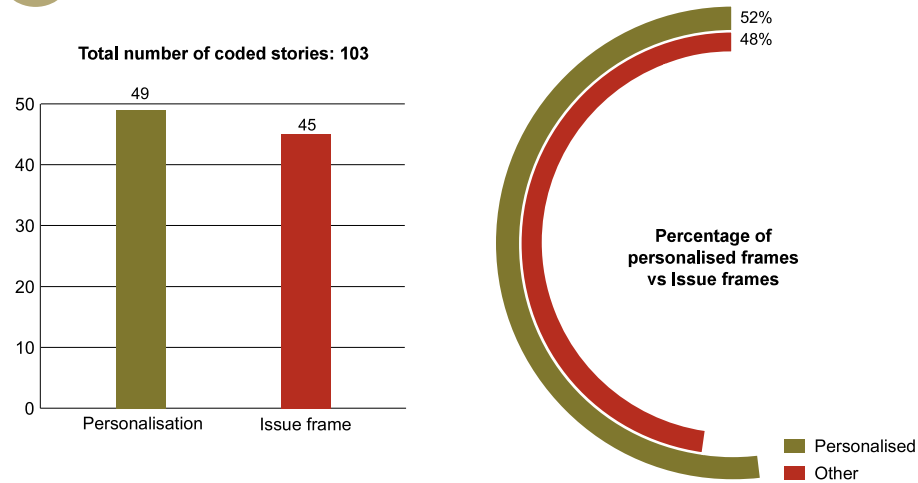
The findings in this study reveal a worrying urban/rural divide with respect to the SABC's news coverage.

**'A view from the suburbs':
Marginalisation of rural areas**

Well-known political analyst, Stephen Friedman, has argued that South African media frame issues from what he calls a 'view from the suburbs', meaning that the media appropriates a middle-class view of politics. This was evident in the analysis of SABC news, which failed to fully represent election events in rural and peri-urban locations.

The SABC is mandated to the principle of universal coverage in terms of diversity of content, public and, indeed, geographic locations. An emerging

Fig 4 Personalisation frames
Source: HSRC, 2016



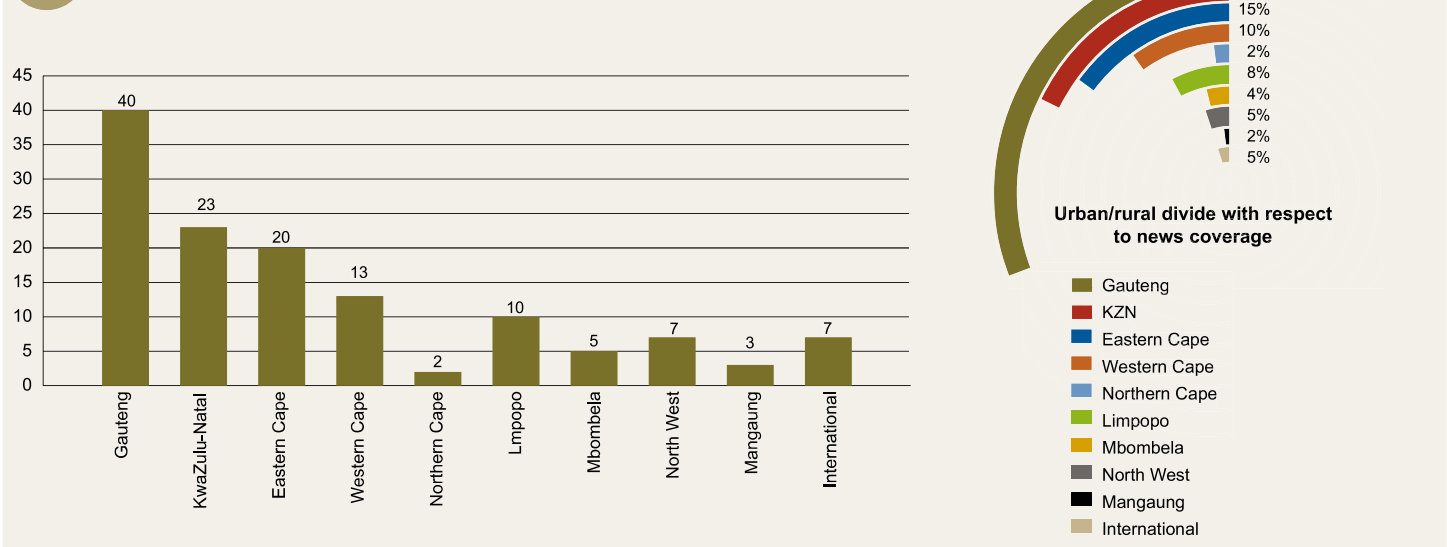
democracy, such as South Africa, cannot afford to develop and view itself only through the eyes of the elite and urban dwellers.

Indeed, the findings in this study reveal a worrying urban/rural divide with respect to the SABC's news coverage (Figure 5). It should be noted, however, that the geographic distribution pattern of the SABC's election news coverage was relatively reflective of the population sizes of South African provinces, as recorded by Statistics South Africa (2011). For instance, the province of Gauteng, though the smallest

geographically, has the largest number of people living in it – about 23.7% of the total SA population.

In the sampled bulletins, Gauteng accounted for 31% of the coverage. The second biggest population size, 18%, is located in KwaZulu-Natal. This province received the second most coverage in the sampled bulletins. The least coverage (2%) was from the Northern Cape, the province with the smallest population of 2.2% of the total SA population.

Fig 5 Urban/rural divide with respect to news coverage
Source: HSRC, 2016



The SABC has the important role of mediating pluralist politics, clarifying issues relating to all candidates during an election and simplifying the choices for the electorate.

Conclusion

Owing to its public service mandate and its own news editorial policies, the SABC has the important role of mediating pluralist politics, clarifying issues relating to all candidates during an election and simplifying the choices for the electorate. Only when the electorate understands the electoral process, how political parties function and how they fit into the governmental structure, can they fully appreciate how a candidate becomes the party's official nominee. Without the media and the SABC, in particular, the electorate would have to find its way through the confusing clutter of issues, candidates and government actions.

In other words, the SABC is one of the key vehicles by which the electorate are informed of their candidates, choices or issues. While on paper the mandate of the SABC is clear and democratic, in practice the broadcaster has often been accused of acting contrary to its mandate and obligations.

Furthermore, the SABC has faced numerous challenges over the years. Institutionally, these challenges relate to the legal and funding model of the broadcaster, which compromises its

editorial independence. Politically, the broadcaster has faced numerous accusations of censorship and political interference in its editorial decisions. In the weeks preceding the local government elections in 2016, for example, the SABC came under fire for censorship when its chief operations officer Hlaudi Motsoeneng, instituted a policy directive that visuals of violent protest action should be excluded from television news bulletins. Journalists who questioned this decision were slapped with charges of insubordination, sparking widespread criticism from the media fraternity and media freedom institutions. The negative developments at the SABC culminated in a parliamentary inquiry which has yet to be concluded.

Representing the generality of the public by addressing the broadest possible range of views, topics and actors, in a more or less equitable manner, is not an easy call for the SABC to make. The broadcaster has to grapple with complexities arising from its contentious PSB normative model,

which, on the one hand, prioritises development and other humanistic values while, on the other, the SABC must ensure its sustainability and financial lifeblood through advertising, driving audience numbers; guaranteeing the 'public interest' agenda and its obligation to citizens who keep the institution afloat through the regulated licence fee funding model.

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