



ARASA

Regional Learning and Reflection

Lab on BAI for Media

5-7 July, 2021

REPORT

OVERVIEW: Felicita Hikuam, ARASA Director

The AIDS and Rights Alliance for Southern and East Africa (ARASA) convened a virtual regional learning and reflection lab on bodily autonomy and integrity (BAI) for media partners and practitioners (participants) in southern and east Africa. The aim was to build and strengthen capacity on concepts related to BAI and best reporting practices thereof, to influence national, regional and international human rights policies.

As key influencers, media partners and practitioners must understand the importance of media as a tool for a rights-based approach to framing and disseminating key and vulnerable populations issues to initiate national and regional change.

The challenge with confronting deep-seated cultural practices that result in gross violations of human rights, is in negotiating the balance between individual and group rights. Where group rights are emphasised, human rights violations at an individual level tend to be obscured, abetted and even encouraged. Conversely, where and when individual rights are emphasised, social cohesion in multicultural settings may easily become fractious if not managed very well. This applies in respect of many social phenomena, including among others Bodily Autonomy and Integrity (BAI).



Some of the common ways in which BAI is violated include forced sterilisation and contraceptive use, homophobic and transphobic rape, forced and child marriage, female genital mutilation, 'honour' killings, marital rape and 'marry-your-rapist' laws, reproductive coercion and denial of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (UNFPA, 2021).

The social groups most vulnerable to these forms of violence are likely to be women and children, more so in societies where patriarchal attitudes and practices have remained entrenched. For instance, as the UNFPA (2021) observes, recent attempts to measure bodily autonomy show that "only 55% of girls and women are able to make their own decisions" regarding bodily autonomy and integrity issues, "about 71% of countries have laws guaranteeing access to overall maternity care", "about 80% of countries have laws supporting sexual health and well-being", and "about 56% of countries have laws and policies supporting comprehensive sexual education" among other things.

It has also been noted that "women enjoy just 75% of the legal rights of men" (UNFPA, 2021). Evidently, there are huge gaps in terms of women's recognition as equal humans to their male counterparts especially in terms of their Bodily Autonomy and integrity. Some challenges to achieving BAI also include but are not limited to aggravating rather than mitigating legal frameworks, economic marginalization, endurance of patriarchal values and practices and attitudinal and other barriers against key populations.

Given this rather bleak outlook on women's and other members of society's enjoyment of bodily autonomy and integrity, it is imperative to bring society's attention to this social ill. One of the most important social actors, whose activities may worsen and mitigate bodily autonomy and integrity rights are news media. Ideally speaking, and in their performance of normative roles in society, news media are expected to highlight and flag inequalities in society, violations of human rights and critically analyse structural factors that tend to create and sustain marginality as well as undermine Bodily Autonomy and Integrity.

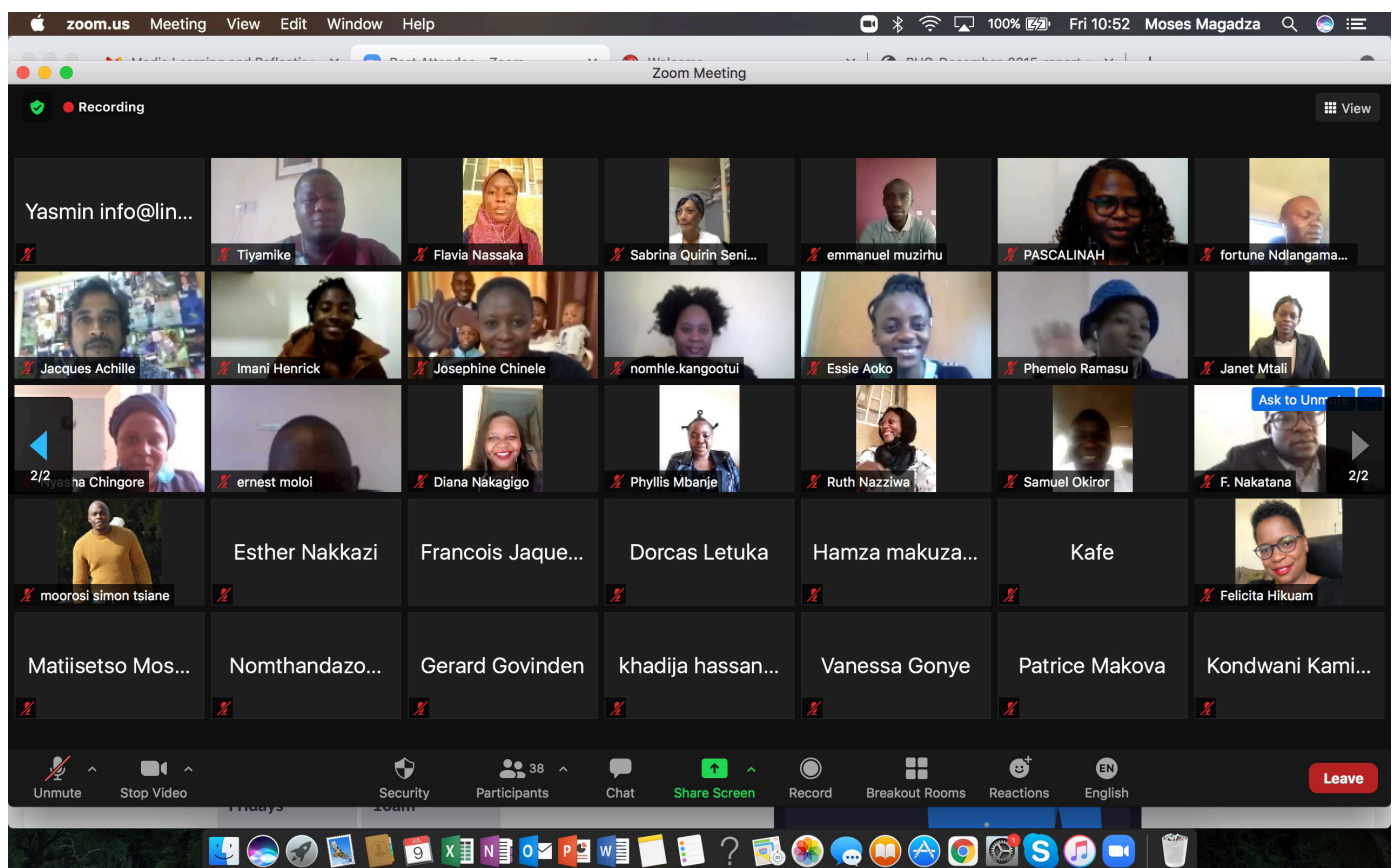
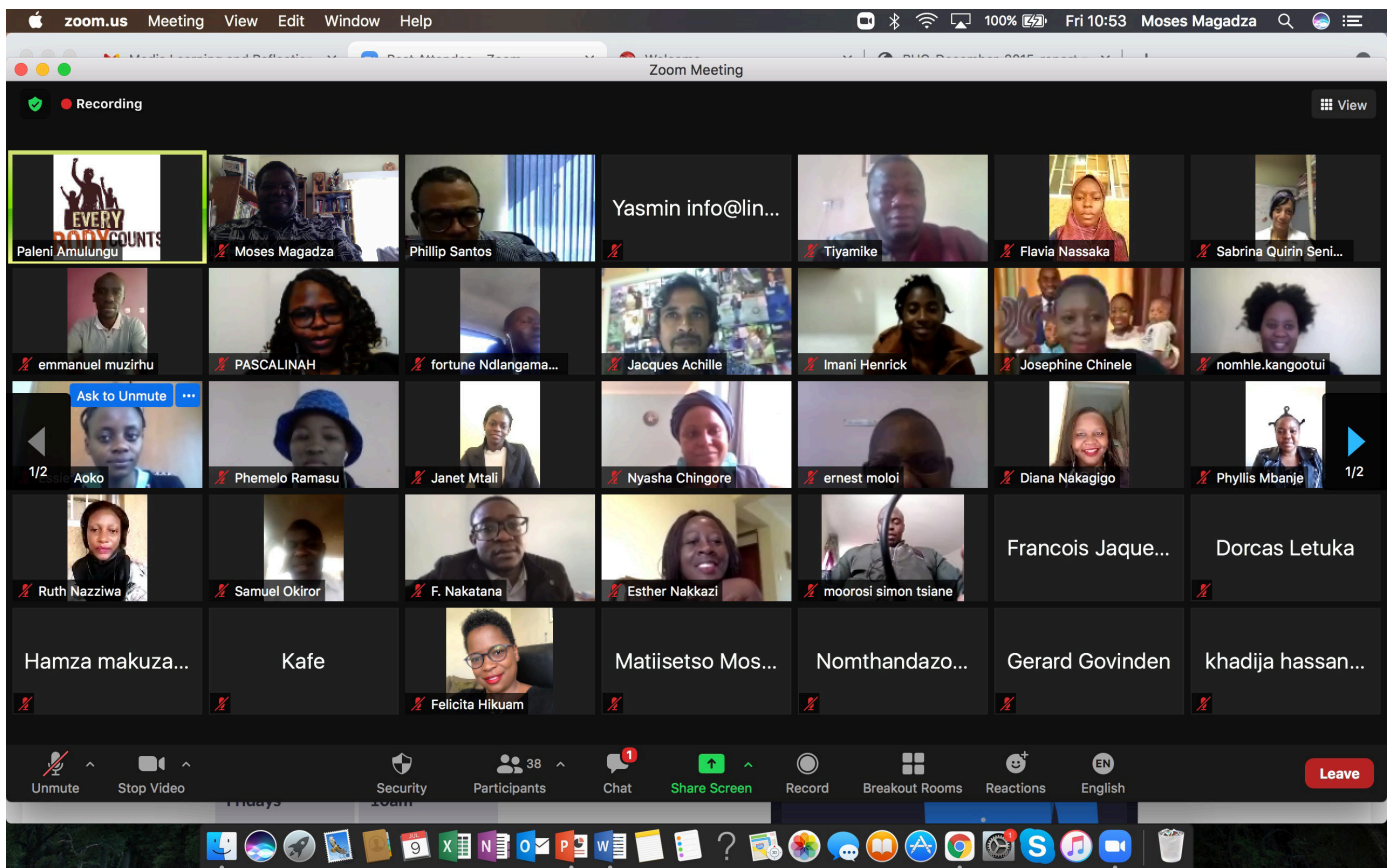
Depending on what they choose to report on, how they do so and the way their own sociological practices are organised, news media can either promote bodily autonomy and integrity or undermine it. It is for this reason, that this workshop was relevant to contemporary exigencies regarding this issue.

The training was divided into three sessions spread over three days.

This report summarizes proceedings during the three-day session and captures recommendations going forward.

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FELICITA HIKUAM
ARASA DIRECTOR

PARTICIPANTS



1. INTRODUCING ARASA AND OBJECTIVES OF THE TRAINING:

Felicita Hikuam, the Director of ARASA

In scene-setting remarks, Felicita Hikuam, the Director of ARASA said her organisation was a partnership of civil society organizations (CSOs) working in 18 countries in Southern and Eastern Africa. Set up in 2002 to promote a rights-based response to HIV and AIDS, ARASA was now working, also, to promote Bodily Autonomy and Integrity (BAI) to reduce inequalities and promote the achievement of personal health, dignity and well-being for all in eastern and southern Africa.

She explained that the active involvement of an informed media was essential in the quest for Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and HIV prevention. Another important aspect of ARASA's work was the generation of evidence to inform advocacy activities aimed at influencing regional and international health policies and standards.

She expressed optimism that the three-day training on the media's coverage of BAI issues would deepen and broaden ARASA's collaboration with the media to influence positive change in SRHR in the sub-region.



2. FRAMING OF BODILY AUTONOMY AND INTEGRITY:

Bience Gawanas, former special Advisor for Africa to the United Nations.

The presentation by Gawanas sought to throw light on how BAI issues manifest in the African context. Drawing on her experience of advocating around BAI issues, Gawanas suggested how the media can protect and promote BAI in their various countries.

She explained that a person's body includes the mind and feelings that are used in asserting control over their bodies in a manner that makes them "comfortable" in their own skin.

Accordingly, owning one's body includes loving oneself and ensuring that one is not violated, abused or harassed. In that respect, an individual should have agency to decide what to do with their body, even in the face of adversity. Gawanas lamented the fact that an overwhelming majority of women own bodies over which they lack control.

She said marginalized sections of society like key populations lacked full control of their bodies and it was appropriate for the media to hold duty bearers to account in advancing SRHR and other issues that affect everyone but especially women, girls and sexual minorities.



Gawanas recommended that, with respect to the Maputo Plan of Action on SRHR, the media should demand and share evidence for the formulation and implementation of relevant laws, programmes and policies at a national level. Additionally, Gawanas challenged the media to probe the Gender Based Violence that persists regardless of laws and policies meant to eradicate it; lack of access to safe abortion; lack of access to Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE); lack of safe spaces for young people to discuss sex and sexuality while accessing appropriate information. On access to safe abortion, Gawanas said it was a myth that only women and girls of indeterminate moral rectitude seek such services.

Hikuam, who facilitated the session, explained that in many instances, BAI violations hide in plain sight while some seemingly harmless socially approved practices can actually violate BAI. She said comments about one's body structure can also amount to violation of BAI.

Gawanas exhorted the media to question and challenge oppressive or even harmful cultural and religious practices that violate BAI. Additionally, she said, the media should continually prick the conscience of policy makers by fearlessly reporting about teenage pregnancy, abortion, baby dumping, lack of access to contraceptives and other barriers to BAI if anticipated change is to be realized.

3. INTRODUCTION TO BAI and SRHR: Nyasha Chingore, Programmes Lead, ARASA.

Chingore defined and demystified basic BAI concepts. This laid a foundation for access to safe abortion, the rights of vulnerable or marginalized groups such as the LGBT community and others to be discussed.

She explained that bodily autonomy and bodily integrity were actually distinct. Bodily autonomy refers to the freedom to make own decisions in relation to one's body. It puts a premium on agency in the face of social or legal sanctions, coercion, violence and discrimination. Bodily autonomy presupposes choice, itself an offshoot of an informed decision backed by the wherewithal to activate one's choice.

She defined bodily integrity as the right not to have one's body touched or physically interfered with or without one's consent. Bodily integrity protects people from physical assaults such as rape, violence or torture as well as medical experimentation and cruel, inhumane treatment such as female genital mutilation, forced HIV testing, sterilization or sex-assigning surgery for intersex children.

It was noted that bodily integrity was a precursor to the attainment of the highest standard of health. Child marriage, forced sex, forced childbearing and other vices that violate BAI were discussed.

It was stressed that the enjoyment of BAI is critical to the realization of the full range of human rights. Chingore outlined human rights and their legal sources as well as how they relate to BAI.

On SRHR, Chingore provided a universally agreed upon comprehensive definition which is: "a state of physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being in relation to all aspects of sexuality and reproduction, not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction, or infirmity".

From the participants, it was observed that in some instances balancing BAI and public health can be difficult, with an example given of the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic and the rollout of vaccination to achieve herd immunity while some citizens were refusing to be vaccinated citing BAI.

Advocating for access to contraceptives for adolescents in the face of stiff resistance by some governments, some religious organizations and other stakeholders in spite of research showing that children were experimenting with sex much earlier than feared, was cited as a major challenge.



4. LAY OF THE LAND: GAPS IN REPORTING BAI IN THE MEDIA: Moses Magadza, Communication and Advocacy Specialist.

Magadza recalled that ARASA launched a campaign dubbed 'EveryBodyCounts!' on 1 October 2020.

The campaign sought, inter alia, to advocate for the realization of BAI in eastern and southern Africa. He reiterated that the campaign sought, also, to agitate for the rights to BAI for everyone, particularly marginalized and disenfranchised people, including sexual minorities to be prioritized in SRHR programming.

Noting that the campaign envisaged collaboration with sub-regional bodies including the SADC Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF) and the SADC Secretariat around sexual orientation, gender identity, HIV prevention, access to safe abortion and integration of SRHR into Universal Health Coverage, Magadza said it was important for the media to keep the public updated about it.

He observed that the launch of the campaign had been extensively covered, with articles being published prominently in national media outlets in several SADC countries including Namibia, Lesotho, Seychelles, Malawi and Botswana.



He noted that thereafter, articles related to work done in implementing countries in collaboration with identified partners, were conspicuously absent from mainstream media. The partners were Positive Vibes in Namibia, Bonela in Botswana, Uganda Network on Law Ethics and HIV/AIDS (UGANET) and Development for Peace Education (DPE).

However, Magadza stressed that the absence of such articles did not mean those partners had not done anything under the campaign. It turned out during the lab that a significant number of the participants were not aware of the campaign while others had reported about issues that fell into the category of BAI unwittingly.

A close reading of some of these articles revealed that the majority were event-driven with traces of what Magadza described as “infantilisation” of BAI beneficiaries in that their voices were absent while officials and powerful members of society spoke for them.

It was recommended that organizations working on BAI issues partner with the media and build the latter's capacity to frame BAI issues from an evidence point of view.

DAY TWO

5. BAI AND PUBLIC HEALTH:

Dr Stellah Bosire, Co-Executive Director of UHAI EASHRI.

Dr Bosire reiterated that from a feminist point of view, BAI ensures that one's body is not subjected to any form of abuse and that they have agency and a choice on a range of issues including who they like or are attracted to.

From a medical perspective, Bosire explained that BAI and ethics were intertwined, with autonomy underpinning outcomes of patient care. Bosire said patients' decisions must not be influenced by policies or laws, some of which were punitive, especially on access to safe abortion.

Bosire gave examples of acts that violate bodily integrity, especially for key populations. Bosire cited intrusive and demeaning physically examination on people suspected to be engaged in same sex relationships in jurisdictions where such are criminalized, marital rape and so-called “corrective rape”.

Bosire said the rights of women living with disability were being violated in different parts of the world by health care providers when they sought SRHR services. Bosire stressed that everyone is entitled to pleasurable and fulfilling sex.

Bosire challenged the media to popularize BAI- related laws so that people can hold duty bearers accountable on BAI issues. Bosire also noted that mental health was largely neglected. However, Bosire explained that forced medical treatment or procedures could be permissible in certain circumstances, for example, when collecting evidence in sex-related crimes like rape in the best interest of the survivor of the crime.

On serious public health threats and crises like COVID-19, Bosire said an individual can refuse treatment or vaccination except in the interest of justice or the greater community. Bosire said it is wrong to assume that a person with some form of mental health challenge had no agency.

On barriers inherent in the health care system, Bosire observed that many health facilities were designed to serve “males and females” with no regard to gender diversity and thus posed severe challenges for transmen or trans women among others.



“The media must popularize BAI-related laws so that people can hold duty bearers accountable on BAI related issues.

- Dr Stellah Bosire

6. BODILY AUTONOMY AND INTEGRITY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE LAW,

The Honorable Justice Prof Oagile Bethuel Key Dingake,
President of the Africa Regional Judges Forum

This presentation sought to build an understanding of media practitioners on the links between BAI and SRHR within the context of law and more particularly, human rights.

The Judge stressed that human rights were basic rights and freedoms that accrue to every person by virtue of their being human. They are God-given and inalienable and are based on shared values such as dignity, equality, liberty, freedom, self-determination, and independence. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and some national constitutions often guarantee these rights. Sadly, most people are unaware of their rights, including those touching on BAI.

The media should thus create greater awareness of BAI and its applicability in the context of law and human rights. Noting that the media plays a pivotal role in the development of any society, Justice Dingake said the media must understand the intersection between BAI, the law and human rights.

He cited aggravating rather than mitigating legal frameworks, economic marginalization, endurance of patriarchal values and practices and attitudinal and other barriers against key populations among other challenges to achieving BAI.

He challenged the media to highlight violations of human rights and critically analyse structural factors that tend to create and sustain marginality, as well as undermine Bodily Autonomy and Integrity. He said even Judges should be held accountable in the quest towards BAI.

He stressed the importance of: a) Enhancing journalists' interest in and motivation for reporting on BAI/SRHR issues through training and competitive grants for meaningful and effective reporting on BAI/SRHR issues; b) building the capacity of journalists to report simply and clearly on reproductive health research and the capacity of reproductive health researchers to communicate their research to the media using plain language, devoid of jargon, where practicable; and c) establishing and maintaining trust and mutual relationships between journalists and researchers.

He challenged journalists to produce accurate reports about Sexual and Reproductive Health issues, to subject taboo subjects to discussion, monitor governments' progress towards the achievement of stated goals, and to make government officials accountable to the public.

He enjoined ARASA to remain committed to motivating and building "the capacity of the media to educate the populace about the need to honour in word and deed, the constitutional provisions of member States that seek to honour the all-embracing right to life and the right to equality and equal protection of the law".

He challenged the media to cover BAI/SRHR issues in a critical, informed and respectful manner.

"Do not hesitate to criticize Judges if they betray their constitutional oath of office. We are not infallible. Neither are we untouchable angels. A critical appraisal of our judgments is necessitated by the fact that law is fraught with illusion; the illusion that law and justice mean the same thing ... the ultimate objective of law must be the welfare of the people," he said among many other things. This panel discussion sought to provide a platform for activists to share lessons and strategies on advocating around the youth and BAI; the right to safe abortion; LGB rights; the rights of transgender people; and gender-based violence.

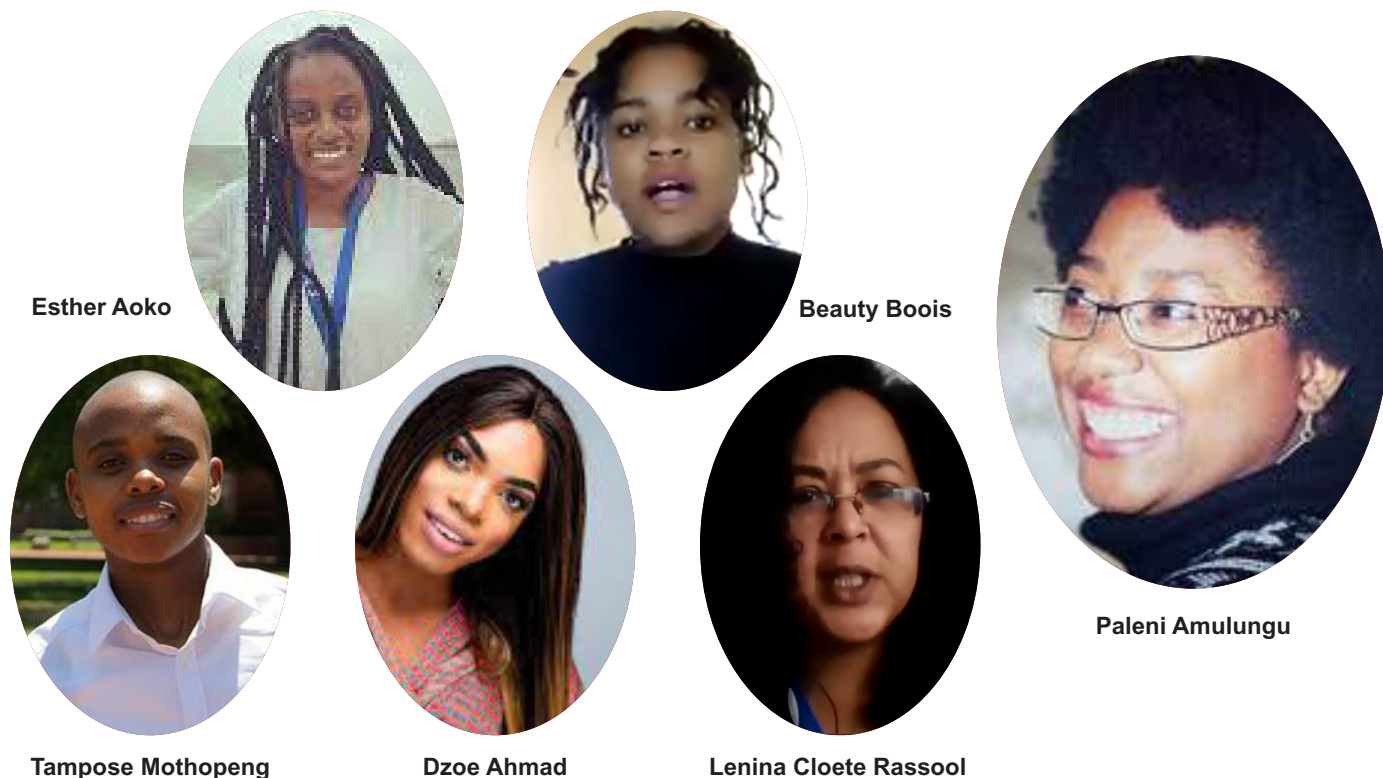
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- Honorable Justice Prof Oagile Bethuel Key Dingake



7. PANEL DISCUSSION; BAI AND SRHR Advocacy:

Paleni Amulungu, ARASA Communication Officer (Facilitator)



On hand to share experiences were **Esther Aoko**, a SRHR Youth Advocate from Kenya; **Beauty Boois**, Co-founder of Voices for Choices and Rights Coalition; **Tampose Mothopeng**, Director, The People's Matrix Association of Lesotho; **Dzoe Ahmad**, Co-programmes Manager Gender Dynamix of South Africa; and **Lenina Cloete Rassool**, Activist and Producer of the Womxn Show of South Africa.

Aoko said accessing information to support SRHR advocacy was a major challenge which limits young people's access to services. She explained that a dearth of information and counterfactual evidence creates fertile ground for myths and misconceptions that subject advocates to discrimination, thus hindering them and the communities from accessing information.

On a positive note, Aoko noted that the active involvement of the media in sharing information had resulted in a change of perception towards SRHR. There were signs, also, that the Government of Kenya was warming up to the need to ensure greater access to SRHR services to the people and addressing GBV – a major social problem in Kenya.

Aoko recommended that given discrimination against key populations and advocates that champion their cause, there was need for more to be done to create awareness about the social experience of diverse groups in society. Governments as duty bearers, need to walk their talk about accessing SRHR and combating GBV and other barriers by allocating local or domestic resources to support related programmes.

From Namibia, Boois said their advocacy work began when they launched a petition to repeal highly restrictive abortion laws in Namibia. In all, 62 000 people signed the petition, a huge feat in a country where abortion is outlawed except under extremely stringent conditions. In 2020, the petition was tabled in the National Assembly and there was a massive reproductive justice march in Windhoek in August 2020.

Boois explained that the ultimate goal was to form a coalition of various human rights, LGBT and SRHR organisations to agitate for access to safe abortion in Namibia.

On challenges faced, Boois said there had been significant push back from anti-abortion formations who have also staged anti-choice protests and launched an online petition calling for the criminalization of abortion. Additionally, other organisations had invested mightily in anti-abortion messaging through mainstream media via paid-for advertorials. There had been, also, smear and misinformation campaigns, including unsubstantiated claims that Boois et al were promoting sex among minors and adultery.

In extreme cases, individual activists had been subjected to personal attacks as part of the broader push back. Regardless, the coalition is relentless in its adherence to evidence based advocacy, according to Boois.

Going forward, Boois recommended a paradigm shift that includes abandoning “gendered language” when reporting or discussing abortion related issues.

From Lesotho, Tampose said advocating for LGB rights was difficult because of the “heteronormative nature” of Lesotho’s legal framework as well as the country’s traditions and cultural norms.

Tampose explained that the legal environment in Lesotho did not guarantee protection of the rights of key populations. Homophobia remained a challenge, with some members of the gay and lesbian community being subjected to physical attacks including “murder and corrective rape” as well as “arranged marriages” regardless of their sexual orientation, especially in rural areas. There had been reports, also, of some members of the LGB community in Lesotho being “forced into traditional schools” according to Tampose.

On access to health services, Tampose said there was a serious dearth of facilities and tailor-made services designed to respond to the unique needs of LGB communities in Lesotho despite the availability of external funds for this purpose.

Lack of access to safe abortion remained a challenge, as did rape and lack of protection of rights of the LGB community in the workplace. In some instances, some LGB members had been ostracized by their families and churches due to their sexual orientation. Lack of information was another key challenge, leading to human rights abuses at the community level.

On advocating around issues that affect transgender people in Southern Africa, Ahmad from Gender Dynamix explained that issues of transgender people had been combined with or subsumed under issues of social orientation leading to lack of protection of trans diverse and intersexual communities who bore the brunt of discrimination and violation as well as limited access to human rights and gender expression.

Trans and gender diverse populations continued to struggle to enter social spaces and were thus unable to contribute to economic development or claim cultural and political rights in the context of self-determination, bodily autonomy or agency. The mismatch of gender marker identity documents limits these individuals’ access to bank accounts, job opportunities etc.

It was nevertheless noted that there had been progress in access to services on SRHR in Southern Africa but gender-affirming health care services were inadequate leading to the majority of the ostracized people self-medicating.

On the right to name, identity, equal and non-discriminatory health welfare, social assistance, food, shelter, education etc., members of the trans population had no easy access, Ahmad noted.

With COVID-19 raging, many transgender people who hitherto relied on sex work were struggling to access decent accommodation, leading to a violation of their rights including the right to dignity.

Also, from South Africa, Rassool, who runs a television programme on GBV, said there were many drivers of GBV yet the media was not exhaustively reporting about them.

The Ford Foundation financially supports the television program. A defining and distinguishing characteristic of Rassool’s show is that it focuses less on the victims and perpetrators of GBV. It tries not to sensationalize the crime by focusing on service delivery to ensure that survivors of GBV are served speedily instead of being moved from pillar to post.

It was noted that with respect to rape, for instance, there were low statistics with respect to the conviction of perpetrators in South Africa, which was dubbed the rape capital of the world. Yet the media had not probed the low rates of conviction.

“Given discrimination against key populations and advocates that champion their cause, there is need for more to be done to create awareness about the social experience of diverse groups in society.

- Esther Aoko

8. NEWS MEDIA AND BAI:

Dr Phillip Santos, Senior Lecturer, NUST, Namibia

The presentation by Dr Phillip Santos highlighted the central role of news media in building and sustaining democratic societies, which he said are characterised by such attributes as bona fide diversity, inclusivity and equality among other things.

Drawing on Christians et al.'s (2009) work, he also pointed out the news media's key roles in democratic or democratising societies such as the monitorial, facilitative, collaborative and radical roles.

Dr Santos highlighted that although the news media are conscientious about the monitorial and facilitative roles and often find themselves wittingly or unwittingly performing the collaborative role (especially state owned/controlled media in Africa), less attention was given to the radical role.

He went on to argue that the numerous justice questions that afflict contemporary society such as gender injustice, racial injustice, and injustices faced by key populations required the news media to assume a more radical role in their reportage of these injustices. This is more so in instances where these injustices seem normal and are legitimised in terms of socio-cultural norms which are reproduced in or resonate with unjust legal frameworks.

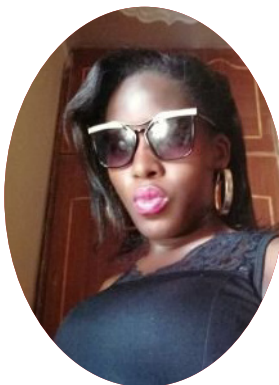
Under these circumstances, he argued, the news media ineluctably become the only and last line of redemption for social groups and individuals at the receiving end of injustices. These include key populations and other vulnerable groups such as children and women whose Bodily Autonomy and Integrity (BAI) is often violated in ways that seem innocuous in patriarchal and misogynistic social contexts.

Examples of violations against these groups include rape, sodomy, genital mutilation, SGBV and GBV. Dr Santos argued that the perpetrators of these violations cannot and should not be treated by news media as morally equivalent to their victims. Instead, he argued, the news media must fight for justice in terms of universally acceptable moral standards and thereby assume a radical role in their reportage of issues that often get obscured in socially sanctioned but unjust practices.



9. PANEL DISCUSSION - GOOD PRACTICES IN FRAMING BAI ISSUES:

Moses Magadza (Facilitator)



Flavia Nassaka



Jacques Achille



Nomhle Kangoutui

This panel discussion sought to enable peer learning with journalists from different countries sharing their thrills and spills in reporting about BAI. The panelists were: **Flavia Nassaka**, Writer, The Independent News Magazine of Uganda; **Jacques Achille**, Chief Editor of Scope Magazine Le Mauricien Ltd from Mauritius; and **Nomhle Kangoutui**, Community and Health Journalists from Namibia.

Nassaka said most editors in Uganda were still not accommodative of BAI related articles, especially those on access to abortion, or contraceptives with some journalists focusing on post abortion care instead. Journalists have resorted to packaging their articles creatively for them to be published. There was thus self-censorship on the part of journalists.

From Mauritius, Achille said he had heard about BAI for the first time during the lab. Regardless, he had been reporting about BAI-related issues that affect key populations very extensively for nearly 25 years. He explained that when he started reporting about key populations especially commercial sex workers and people who inject drugs (PWID), the greatest challenge was how to convince newsroom gatekeepers, including editors, that such issues were newsworthy as they were human rights issues.

Achille's observation was that covering key populations and reporting on BAI issues had suffered from experimentation because there was no guidance or template on appropriate language/terminology and how to gain the trust of the news subjects or adopting the correct angle when framing the issues.

He said effective coverage of BAI requires that journalists be proactive to effect change in society. Rather than wait for BAI articles to come to them, journalists must seek them out and build - even painstakingly - relationships with BAI holders to access their stories and be able to put a face to their stories.

From Namibia, Kangoutui said covering BAI issues, especially those involving sexual offences, could be very traumatic for journalists, many of whom could not remain detached from their subjects.

She said CSOs need to act on some of the BAI articles and help people who suffer BAI violations. Unless that happens, journalists can feel discouraged as they might feel that their articles are not effecting change. There was need for more training to enable journalists to frame BAI articles with tact and assiduity.

She said it was very difficult to access data and information with some CSOs refusing to share information with the media before sharing with governments.

10. GOING FORWARD: WHAT JOURNALISTS NEED TO REPORT ON BAI

At the end of the lab, participants, who included a Chief Executive Officer, an Editor in Chief and Senior editors and Journalists made recommendations on what can be done to enable media to report on BAI issues frequently and factually.

Below are some of their recommendations:

- Organisations working on BAI issues must partner with journalism schools so that BAI issues become part of the curriculum;
- The media must be a vigilant watchdog which provides oversight on the justice system so that survivors of GBV and related violations are protected from the possibility multilayered violations: say by a perpetrator and an inept justice system;
- Navigating the justice system is notoriously bewildering for lay people. Therefore, the media must help educate laypeople about steps involved seeking justice;
- Media must help bring men and boys onboard given that men were noted to make a significant percentage of victims and survivors of GBV;
- Media must be relentless in pricking the conscience of duty bearers, especially about the low levels of prosecution of perpetrators of GBV and other related violations of BAI;
- Media must become LGBT-inclusive and mind its language. The aim should be to generate reportage that educates and informs than that which fuels anger, stigma and discrimination;
- ARASA must nurture partnerships with the media at an international level and seriously consider offering media awards to recognize and reward outstanding reportage;
- Politicians need to be reached with accurate information so that they make responsible and evidence-based pronouncements through the media;
- The media must protect or uphold the dignity of people they report about and aim for accuracy given its potential to shape public perceptions;
- Activists should help journalists reach people experiencing violations of BAI so the media can put a human face to their stories;
- ARASA should compile a list of people and organizations that journalists can contact and quote given that getting information and sources was cited as a big challenge;
- ARASA must organize regular capacity building sessions for the media on current and emerging BAI related issues;
- ARASA must win over editors and other gatekeepers so that BAI issues are prioritized and published prominently;
- ARASA must keep the media abreast of BAI related developments or share news tips;
- ARASA must share or produce toolkits, data and information packs and share with the media on BAI;
- ARASA must make training a process not an event and continue engaging with the media;
- ARASA must create a social Media platform for all participants like a WhatsApp group so they remain in touch and exchange ideas;

- ARASA and like-minded organisations must consider offering media grants to support journalists in accessing hard-to-reach areas and communities;
- ARASA must link media houses with CSOs and other organizations working on BAI issues in their various countries;
- ARASA must point out publications that can readily accept and publish BAI articles so that journalists can send their stories there if publishing such in their countries is difficult;
- ARASA must provide factual evidence through the media to influence policy formulation, policy implementation or policy modification, as the case may be;
- Media must frame/package BAI -related issues creatively to circumvent legal restrictions;
- ARASA must build the capacity of the media to fully appreciate legal context as it relates to BAI issues in their various jurisdictions;
- Media must embrace advocacy/radical journalism to cover BAI-related issues.

11. VOTE OF THANKS:

Mr. Gerard Govinden, the Chief Executive Officer of Seychelles Nation newspaper

Mr. Govinden thanked ARASA for organising the lab, saying it had been “an eye-opener.” He expressed optimism that the participants would use all the lessons shared during the lab to broaden and deepen coverage of BAI-related issues.

He urged newspapers throughout the sub-region to introduce a health page so that articles on BAI issues have guaranteed space. He challenged the media to use its agenda-setting function to generate debate on BAI-related issues and influence desired change.



12. PARTICIPANTS' EVALUATION

Organisers administered an evaluation form to appreciate participants' level of satisfaction and establish areas where further support is needed. Appendix C captures the participants' responses in their own words. Below is a summary:

Most editors/journalists appreciated the awareness that the Media Lab brought about regarding BAI as a specific area of human rights, the different ways in which it is experienced and the power of the media in either undermining or promoting BAI issues.

For instance, some indicated that they appreciate the importance of being factual and are now aware of the need to package stories about BAI in ways that are sensitive to victims and acceptable to society. Some appreciated the knowledge they gained about BAI, experiences of BAI such as the sterilisation of women living with HIV/AIDS, and issues around abortion among other things.

All the editors/journalists indicated the Media Lab had ignited in them a desire to act on BAI issues in different ways depending on what they considered more urgent in their countries or communities.

For instance, some noted they will now approach BAI issues such as abortion in a new light, that they would promote awareness on BAI issues among their audiences, initiate campaigns on SRHR, question stereotypes and highlight BAI abuses and ultimately be agents of change.

On the whole the editors/journalists indicated that the workshop's intentions had been achieved or achieved to some extent both of which are positive evaluations. This affirmative evaluation came with regards to awareness raising on the need to be accurate, avoid stigmatising language and bias in reportage about BAI and Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights. Furthermore, they indicated satisfaction about their ability to identify and investigate rights violations against and policies which inhibit the rights of key and vulnerable populations in Eastern and Southern Africa.

Also, when one assesses the material support that most journalists indicated they would need, it is clear that they have taken significant interest in BAI issues and other related matters. For instance, the editors indicated that they would need comparative statistical data about abortion in the region, more information about disabled persons and sexuality, information about BAI, news media and justice, as well as material about abortion and the law, among other things.

The survey also shows that the editors have a long-term interest in BAI issues from the kind of support they indicated would make their job much easier. For instance, they indicated that they need to expand regional contact networks, participate in short courses that would capacitate their news teams, receive grants to support BAI stories as they may require investigative treatment, as well as attend relevant seminars and lectures.

They also recommended that in future, the workshops could also include more journalists, more diverse speakers, and involve more interaction with participants among other things.

PARTICIPANTS LIST					
	Country	Name	Email	Mobile	Days of Attendance
1.	Eswatini	Nomthandazo Nkambule	nomthienk@gmail.com		1,2, 3
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13. FACILITATOR'S REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Moses Magadza (Facilitator)

It is pleasing that the training drew the participation of many participants from all over Eastern and Southern Africa where ARASA works. It is particularly noteworthy that among the participants were very senior media practitioners. They included a Chief Executive Officer, an Editor in Chief, many desk editors including news editors and senior and very experienced journalists. This is strategically significant. Senior media practitioners fall into the category of gatekeepers. They wield a lot of power and can decide what goes into the media or what gets spiked.

However, the presence of senior editors among cub reporters can be intimidating to the junior journalists who may opt to keep their mouths shut or defer their comments to the seniors.

It is strongly recommended that in the future, trainings must be targeted and separate. The needs and concerns of editors are different from those of junior journalists. For editors the focus is on policy direction for their media houses. Editors are drivers of policy. They decide how often and how much BAI and other stories can be used in an edition or bulletin. They decide what human, financial or other resources are expended on BAI and other issues.

Journalists operate at the operational level. What is more important for journalists – over and above socialization on BAI issues - is more practical training. For example, their training can include case studies or a set of facts, figures, dates and direct quotes as well as sources for them to write articles that can be critiqued or reviewed. It is recommended the training of junior journalists be more technical with a strong focus on the mechanics of news writing.

After this training, the participants are now aware that they need to be factual, unbiased and stigmatizing when reporting on BAI issues. These are abstract issues. There is a need to go into the mechanics of responsible and balanced reportage.

It is recommended that such training be done face-to-face in a newsroom set up and include sub-editors and news editors in various countries.

Although the training drew many participants – nearly 40 – television and radio journalists were underrepresented. However, their needs, challenges and techniques differ markedly from those of their counterparts in the print media. It is recommended that ARASA considers separate training for television and radio journalists.

The programme was rich in terms of topics covered. However, it turned out to be congested. The topics were topical and thought-provoking. They generated questions and comments that could not be exhausted given limited time. Although the facilitator and the organizers, to their credit, tried to create a bit of time to deal with unfinished or burning issues from the previous day before delving into the business of the day, that did not do justice to some of the questions and concerns.

It is recommended that topics be limited and more time is allocated.

The presenters were well-prepared and good. This is commendable. It helped that they were people to whom participants looked up to in terms of experience and gnosis. However, while the presenters were good, the voices of the people who suffer BAI infringements were conspicuously absent.

It is recommended that to the extent possible, ARASA should ensure inclusion of 'I' stories to add a personal and thus unique angle to BAI-related discussions.

During online trainings it is not easy to tell how engaged participants are. During face-to-face sessions the facilitator can put them on the spot and keep them engaged. It is strongly recommended that ARASA considers face-to-face training in different countries. After training, it is important to keep participants together and on the ball. Immediately after this training a WhatsApp group was set up to provide a platform for the exchange of BAI related stories and ideas. It remains to be seen how this has worked.

It is strongly recommended that ARASA considers supporting the setting up of a monthly or a quarterly newsletter for articles written by journalists that were trained. ARASA can commission – for six months or so - journalists to cover specific articles that can be sold to media houses or be given for free.

As COVID-19 sweeps across the world, most media houses are struggling to get good copy, having lost skilled staff to death or greener pastures. Other media houses have downsized or laid off staff. Many media houses are using students. If ARASA establishes this newsletter, it would be a win-win situation. ARASA would continue supporting and guiding people trained who in turn churn out high-quality copy that gives the work ARASA is doing visibly.

Each article could carry a footnote indicating: 'This article was produced with support from ARASA under its campaign to ...' The newsletter could actually be a springboard for ARASA.

Participants were unanimous on the need for awards. It is strongly recommended that ARASA acts on this without delay. The awards could be in three categories (print, TV and Radio) with two or three cash prizes and certificates.

Finally, it is strongly recommended that ARASA develop a toolkit or guide for the media on covering BAI and share it with the media. Additionally, it is suggested that following this largely successful BAI lab, ARASA can design certificates for the participants and email them to them.

