

# GovComms

SEPTEMBER 2012

A newsletter for government and Public Sector communicators

## HIGHLIGHTS



**GOVERNMENT HELPS SA WOMEN TO SUCCEED**  
Better opportunities



**SOCIAL MEDIA TOP PRIORITY AT WORLD MEDIA SUMMIT**



**MEDIA REPORTS**  
Education

## Celebrating 50 editions of Vuk'uzenzele

**V**uk'uzenzele newspaper reaches a significant milestone in September as it publishes its 50th edition. The first issue hit the streets in October 2005, and although it has since changed its format, frequency and appearance, the publication continues to communicate government's programmes and policies to all South Africans.

Since those early days, the newspaper has grown and evolved from a bimonthly glossy magazine to a monthly tabloid with the highest print run in the country. The number of copies printed has increased from 1 million copies every second month in October 2005 to 1.7 million copies monthly today. More than 72 million copies of Vuk'uzenzele have been produced and distributed to date. It is indeed the jewel in the crown.

Vuk'uzenzele has positioned itself within the newspaper industry as the most authoritative voice on the impact of government programmes, especially in poor, outlying communities. Another factor that makes the newspaper stand out is its accessibility. Although the publication is aimed at all South Africans, a concerted effort has been made to make it available to those in rural areas who have limited access to mainstream media. It has the largest circulation of any newspaper in South Africa and is distributed to the most rural areas in all nine provinces at no cost to readers. Vuk'uzenzele remains the only newspaper in South Africa available in all official languages and in braille. The Braille edition has a print run of about 400 copies a month.

Communicators in government are encouraged

to tap into this established resource in communicating the most outstanding service delivery achievements of their departments.

Over the years, the publication has featured informative articles on a wide variety of topics including health, education, safety and security, financial planning, role models, success stories, awareness days, and support for small emerging businesses, improvements in housing and basic services and better roads and transport including other light entertaining features.

The new look of Vuk'uzenzele saw the publication dedicating pages to reflecting government's commitment to key priority areas namely education, safety and security, health, job creation, rural development and infrastructure development programmes. Another addition is a 4-page supplement called Employment News, which features learnerships; job creation related features, internships and bursary opportunities and public sector vacancies.

The dawn of the technological era has not left Vuk'uzenzele behind. The paper is now available online at [www.info.gov.za/vukuzenzele](http://www.info.gov.za/vukuzenzele) and maintains a healthy presence

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**government communications**

Department:  
Government Communication and Information System  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

# Read them and think critically

By Vusi Mona  
vusi@gcis.gov.za

**T**he work of government communicators involves a significant amount of media liaison.

For effective media engagement within the political communication context, a government communicator must possess a conceptual and analytic framework. It would help if such a framework were located within the tradition of critical media theories for it enables one to develop a higher level of critical media analysis

Without such an analysis, it is easy for the communicator to become a media basher rather than a media critic. Worse still, it is easy for a government communicator to simply withdraw from the battle of ideas and let the media say its say uncontested

Government communication today does not require media bashing – a common reflex of government communicators – but a critical analysis of what we read, listen to and watch, followed by robust engagement of the media.

But how does one develop one's analytical skills in critical media analysis? Through reading – the right kind of books – and practising the application of critical media theories on everyday news and editorial comments.

Four books in my collection stand out in this regard. If you read them, you will understand the foundation of critical media analysis.

## ***Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media***

Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky  
Pantheon Books: New York, 2002

In this book, Herman and Chomsky argue that contrary to the usual image of the media as cantankerous and pushing the envelope, in its actual practice the media defends the economic, social and political agendas of the privileged groups that dominate society.

At the end of the book, the reader comes to one conclusion: that the media is actually conservative. The book's unique contribution to the tradition of critical media analysis is its propaganda model.

This model argues that there are five classes of filter in society, which

determine what is news – that is, what gets printed in newspapers or is broadcast by radio and television. These are: corporate ownership of the media, advertising, who the sources are, negative responses to news reports, and anticommunism or the demonisation of enemies.

The authors present several case studies in which they show how TV, newspapers and radio have distorted world events. In the end, an indictment against society's watchdogs is substantiated and the charge of a news system that panders to the interests of the powerful and privileged sticks.

This book is essential reading for the communicator who wants to break out of the flock and construct their own understanding about the media, independent of what the media says it is about or may think it is about.

## ***The New Media Monopoly*** **Ben H. Bagdikian** Beacon Press: Boston, 2004

A colleague, Brent Simons, who heads communications training and development at GCIS, recommended this book to me and I subsequently ordered it.

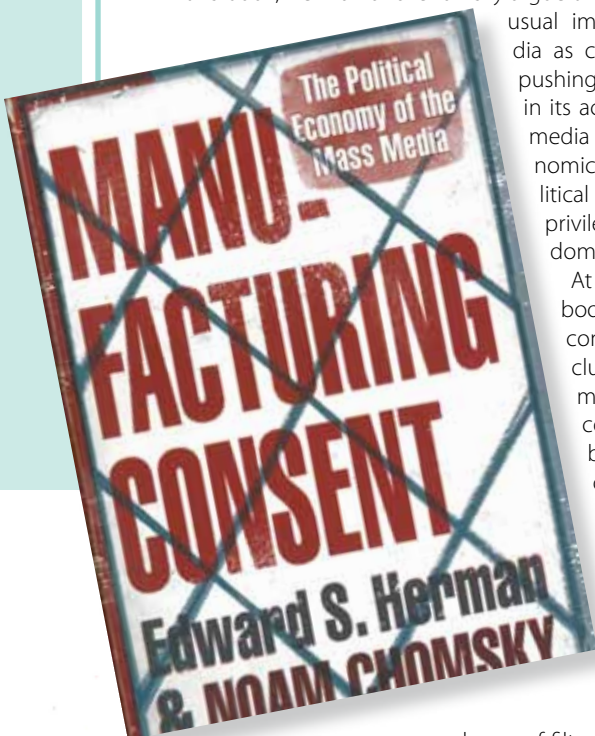
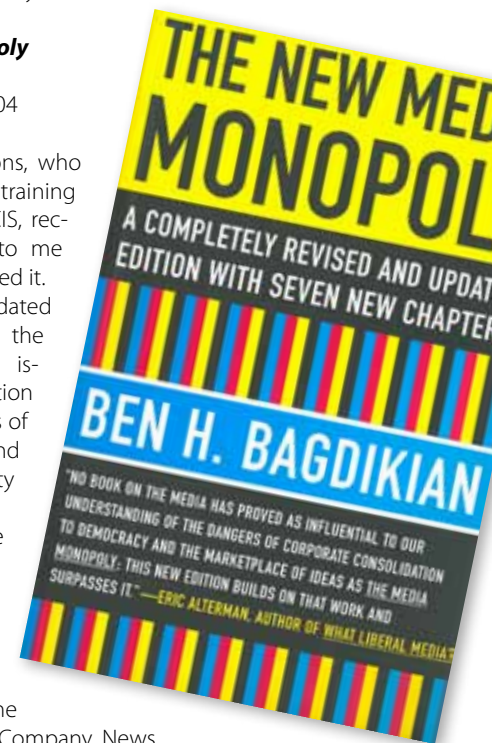
It is a revised and updated edition which builds on the warning Ben Bagdikian issued in the first edition about the chilling effects of corporate ownership and advertising on the quality of news.

Bagdikian decries the concentration of media ownership in the world today. He states that there are five media conglomerates in the world currently: Time Warner, The Walt Disney Company, News Corporation, Viacom and Bertelsmann.

These companies have major holdings in all the media, from newspapers to movie studios. This, he says, gives each of them and their leaders more communication power than was exercised by any despot or dictatorship in history. The effect of such conglomeration is the suffocation of diverse news and dissenting views in the media.

For example, he has a chapter that details the lack of news by American media regarding the rest of the world. He uses the war in Iraq as an example of how concentrated media, singing from the same hymn sheet, failed to provide Americans with all the information needed to make rational decisions as citizens of a democracy.

It is both enlightening and frightening but a valuable book in the government communicator's arsenal.



**Free Markets Free Media?  
Reflections on the Political Economy of the Press in Asia**

Edited by Cherian George  
AMIC: Singapore, 2008

Picked up during a study tour to Asia last year, this book is a collection of papers in which the writers reflect critically on the impact of market forces on efforts to build and consolidate a more democratic media in Asia.

Issues addressed include the argument for public funding to support media diversity, the need to reflect non-elite priorities and concerns in the media and biases in profit-oriented news media, among others and challenges to investigative journalism.

The media often sees itself as a marketplace of ideas, but the editor



of this book, Cherian George, warns that this analogy has equated the sharing of human ideas and experiences with the commercial transaction of goods and service.

When we forget that this is a metaphor, we are a short step from believing that any obstacle or threat to the profit motive is a violation of freedom of expression, she says. Indeed, the conflation of press freedom with capitalism is one of the most sinister distortions of our time.

The book offers a window into how Asian societies have used several patterns of media ownership and organisation to meet the diverse political, social and cultural needs of Asian countries, in particular as they evolved towards greater economic prosperity and political plurality.

The book is a welcome break from Western perspectives and narratives on media and communications studies.

**Lies the Media Tell Us**  
**James Winter**

Black Rose Books: Montreal, 2007

James Winter is not called the Noam Chomsky of Canada for no reason. In this book, he demonstrates an acute understanding of how the media shapes our thinking about social and political issues.

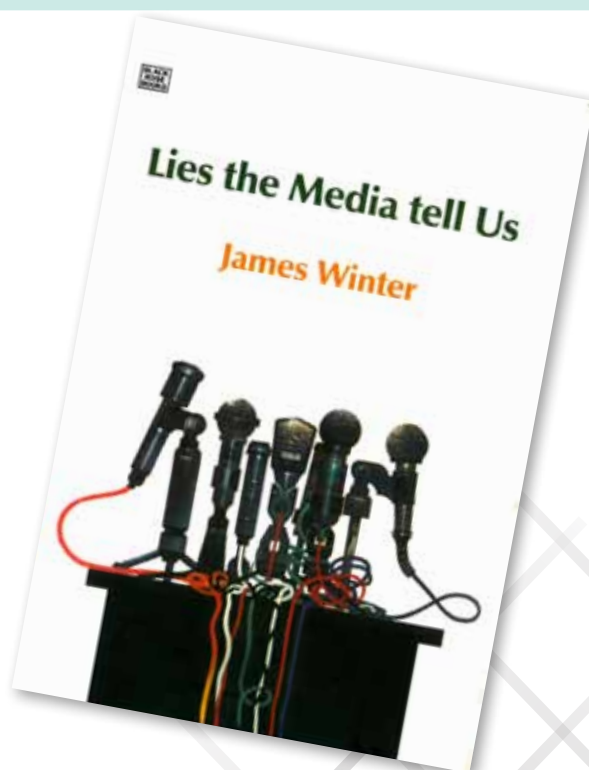
Schooled in Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model, Winter shows how the mainstream media confines us to the limited issues that the propaganda system wants us to hear, read and watch.

In the first chapter, titled How It Works, he lays the foundation for what is to be covered in the rest of the book. He debunks a number of myths about the media. These include the media as a free marketplace of ideas, the virtues of competition, the independence of the press and the "cult" of objectivity, among others.

He laments the ravaging of the news media in his country by the mergers and buy-outs that have taken place in recent years and how that has resulted in high concentration levels.

In example after example, he shows how newspapers and television programmes use, misuse and abuse information. He cites particular examples of media bias against workers and labour unions, environmentalists and the duplicity of pharmaceutical companies in manufacturing diseases that they can "cure", while the media cheer them on.

The book is necessary reading for government com-



municators and all concerned with social justice, democracy and media performance.

**\*Note: Some of these books are available at the GCIS library.**

# Government helps SA women to succeed

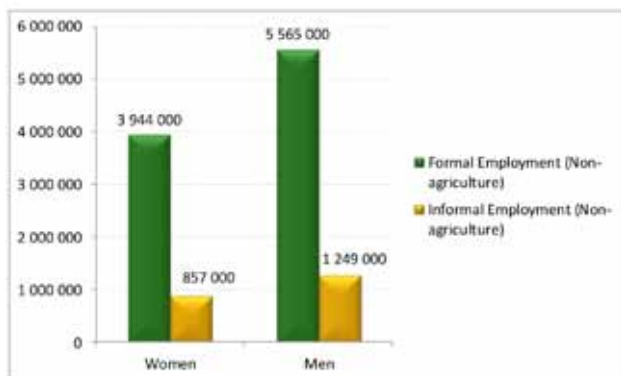
By Ntombi Nala  
ntombi@gcis.gov.za

**G**overnment policies and programmes affect all South Africans, the majority being women and girls. Women and girls, particularly black women and girls, previously experienced multiple forms of discrimination and are among the most disadvantaged groups in the country (Bornman et. al. 2012).

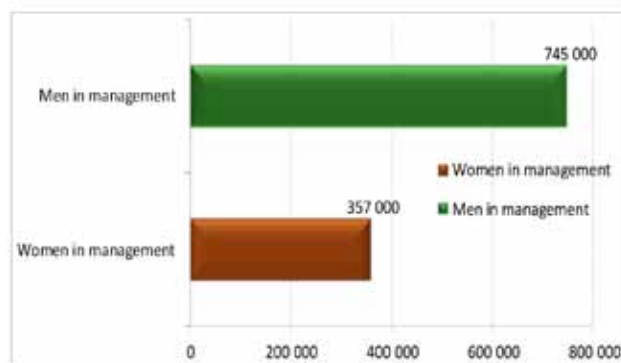
Government priorities outlined in Government's Programme of Action and the areas South Africans perceive to require attention, such as unemployment (61%), housing (27%), roads (25%), corruption (21%) and poverty (20%), reflect a government that is in touch with the needs of the people it serves (GCIS Tracker research, 2012).

According to the latest Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) conducted by Statistics South Africa, the number of employed women increased by 205 000 from the period January–March 2011 to January–February 2012. However, gender-based discrepancies still persist (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Women and men employed in formal and informal employment**



**Figure 2: Number of women and men in management positions**



The industries where women outnumber men are the lowest paid and most menial of jobs such as domestic work. While the 2012 State of the Nation Address, which focuses on infrastructure development, is promising in terms of job creation, it should be considered that the industries and sectors most likely to benefit are male dominated, with the exception of the textile and clothing industry. Given the situation at hand, emphasis on effective implementation of government policies and programmes aimed at dealing with gender inequality and job creation is of major importance.

## Opportunities begin with education

In recent years, government stepped up the emphasis on basic education as a precondition for meaningful, economically active citizenship towards a better life for



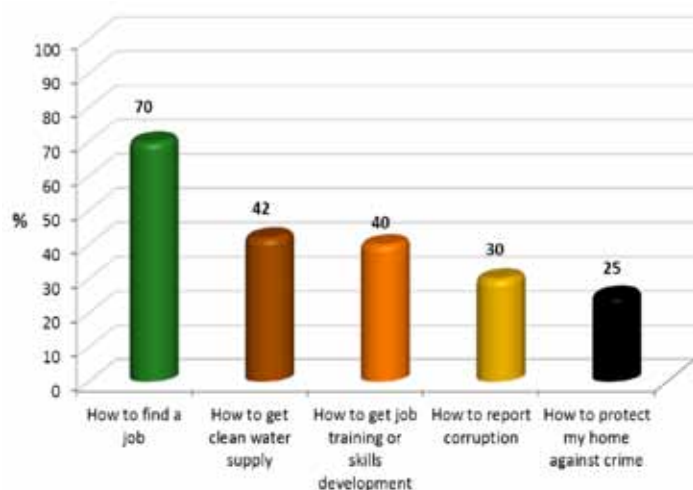
all South Africans. Twelve national priorities were identified as outcomes, with improved quality of basic education being uppermost. Notwithstanding various challenges the 2010 Millennium Development Goals (MDG) report contains evidence that South Africa has made significant progress since 1994 towards addressing the substantial disparities and inequalities in education inherited from the past. Over the years, women's level of education has improved and in 2011 more girls (53%) compared to boys (47%) passed the National Senior Certificate Examination.

According to the most recent findings from the GCIS Tracker research, most respondents perceive government as performing well in addressing educational needs (72%) and in improving the quality of schooling (70%). This represents a substantial improvement of about 30% in the positive rating of government's performance in this area since 2008 (42%). Government is also rated positively by 58% of respondents on the training of teachers and 63% appreciate what government does to improve supplies, such as textbooks to schools. Education is a non-negotiable priority for South Africa to be competitive in a global economy and to alleviate poverty.

#### Information needs of rural women

According to findings from the GCIS Tracker research, rural women are most interested in receiving information that could help them to find jobs (70%), get clean water supply (42%), obtain job training or skills development (40%), report corruption (30%) and to protect their homes against crime (25%).

**Figure 3: Information needs of rural women**



Rural women are most interested in information that can help them to attend to the basic needs of their families and how to report corruption or bad service from government officials.

#### Conclusion

Effective implementation of policies and programmes aimed at the empowerment of women and sharing of relevant information from government regarding opportunities brought about by democratic governance will go a long way to improve the daily lives of South African women and that of their families further.



# Social media top priority at World Media Summit

By Roze Moodley  
roze@gcis.gov.za

**M**ore than 300 top managers, representing 213 mass media organisations across the globe, converged in Moscow recently to participate in the World Media Summit.

Moscow is the second-most populous city in Europe, and home to one of the largest communities of billionaires in the world. Delegates discussed a host of issues dominating the international fraternity. Most prominent of these was the role of social media in the modern information space.

Arguments over the two days focused on social networks and other similar Internet resources as engines of democracy, while others made a strong case for why they are a tool with which to control public opinion.

The summit, organised by the Russian state news agency, ITAR-TASS, drew participants from 103 countries under the theme "World Media: the Challenges of the 21ST Century".

The event was attended by representatives of major news agencies and television and radio companies such as the Associated Press, BBC, Reuters, NBC, Al-Jazeera, Kyodo, Xinhua, and MENA. Guests included the leaders of nine international organisations, including UNESCO, and also a delegation of the European Parliament.

According to UNESCO, two billion people worldwide use the Internet and there are around 156 million public blogs on the worldwide web.

Interestingly enough, where at least a year ago, big media players were still mediating their way through a dialogue on convergence, media now have little choice but to converge if they hope to stay alive.

The agreement is that it is vital to diversify platforms and all platforms should be used to spread news and information. However, this remains a matter of technologies and flexibility as well as the 'power' of the media outlet itself.

The debate in the media industry has now shifted to that of how to regulate content from contributors on especially social media platforms and blogs.

Media players would like to think that theirs is a professional industry where ethics, self-regulation, adherence to the facts and accuracy are top of mind and paramount to the trade.

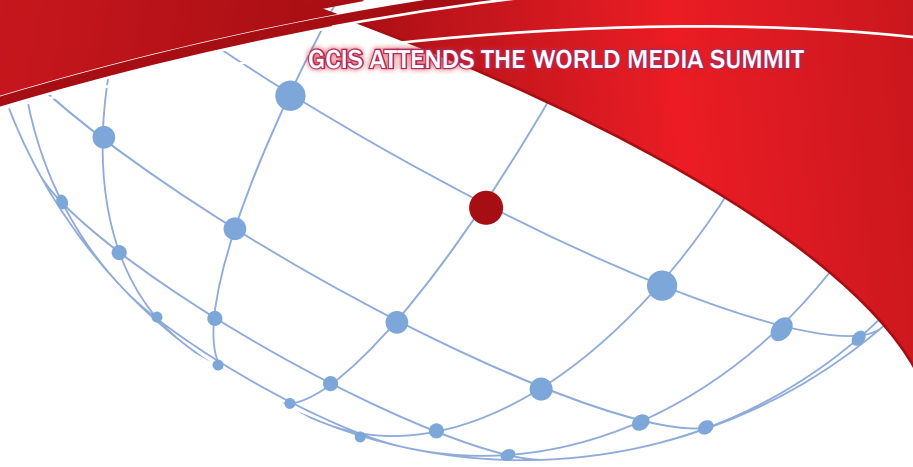
But how do you control what ordinary Joe Blog has to say on these platforms? And what about the fact that ordinary Joe Blog suddenly has the power to incite an entire nation with merely one blog, a short tweet or a Facebook post?

It was interesting therefore to see UNESCO expressing concern over the intention of some countries' leaders to restrict the freedom of speech on the Internet.

"As the spread of information and communication technologies grow, we see a global trend towards ensuring bigger control and regulation of the Internet," assistant director-general for commu-



Representatives attend the 2nd World Media Summit in the Russian capital, Moscow, on 5 July 2012.. More than 300 representatives from 213 media outlets in 102 countries and regions gathered in Moscow on that Thursday for the second World Media Summit. Photo: Xinhua



nication and information Janis Karklins pointed out.

The expert expressed confidence that freedom of speech on the Internet should be protected by users themselves who need to have certain "information literacy skills".

So, the big questions are what these information literacy skills are, and in a world where there are already one billion smartphone users globally and an audience which has mostly taken control of the information flow, how we regulate these contributors?

"UNESCO believes the problems such as violation of confidentiality and violence against children that have spread since the birth of the Internet can be properly resolved when citizens develop and deepen their information literacy skills," Karklins said.

Still, this does not answer the questions.

Director of BBC World Service Peter Horrocks went to great lengths to point out that the time when readers were merely reading and listening to what the media was saying has passed.

"Now they are writing news reports even quicker than journalists, as the Internet has become an instrument for involving society in news making and gives more freedom."

Consensus is that there is a new breed of journalists taking to the field who form part of the information world we live in and feed the appetite and hunger for news and information.

As one speaker pointed out, "Consumption of news has never been higher; it is exploding!" And this with the audience taking control of the information flow!

Much of the debate at the summit then focused on the use of social media to inflame anti-ethnicity among groups, tribalism and incite general conflict.

The summit went to great lengths to discuss how ordinary people were considering themselves as journalists, but "thinking as politicians" and inciting people towards a particular bias.

The minister of communication and media in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lambert Mende Omalanga, was quick to point out in an interview that in a country that is home to 404 ethnic groups, this posed a huge challenge.

"In a country of 404 ethnic groups that have fought one against one another, we have to be cautious about using social media to inflame anti-ethnicity among groups.

"There are non-professional journalists who use social media to bring about issues such as tribalism, ethnicity and violence."

Minister Omalanga's view on the regulation of this phenomenon includes that the users of these platforms should not be using them anonymously.

This sounds idealistic, but he believes governments especially should be able to tell who is posting on these platforms.

"They should sign some sort of self-control clause," he says.

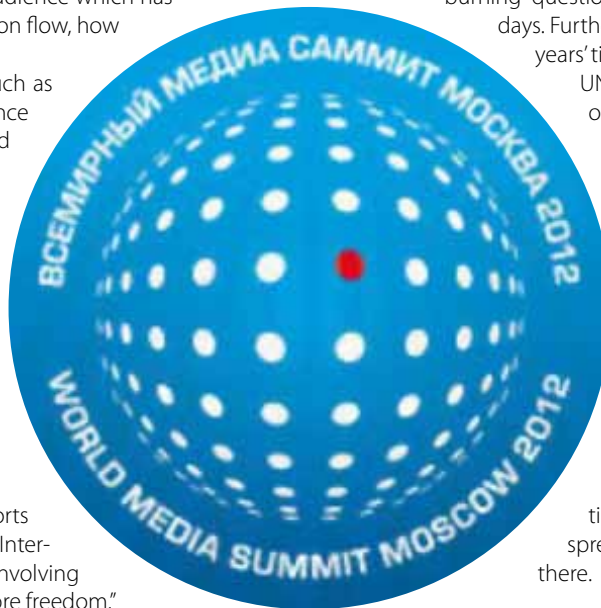
He believes seeing that governments make an effort to ensure journalists practise responsible journalism the same should be done with "these new actors".

And as with most summits, all the answers to these burning questions could not be found over two days. Further discussions will take place in two years' time in Bahrain.

UNESCO's Karklins seemed to be on the right track though when he pronounced that media in any country has little choice but to assume a higher responsibility.

"In seeking to support the democracy, they should insist on the struggle against corruption, transparency and accountability of governmental decisions, combating the scale of poverty and improving the human rights situation," he said.

These wise words were aimed at professional media – but the time has come, it seems, for this to spread to "the new breed of media" out there.



*Moscow Mayor Sergey Sobyenin at the World Media Summit.*

# From school desk to news desk - media reports on education

By Nkele Sebas  
nkele@gcis.gov.za

**D**uring the budget vote debate for Higher Education Minister Blade Nzimande said: "Education now constitutes more than 21% of government's total allocated expenditure for the 2012/13 financial year."

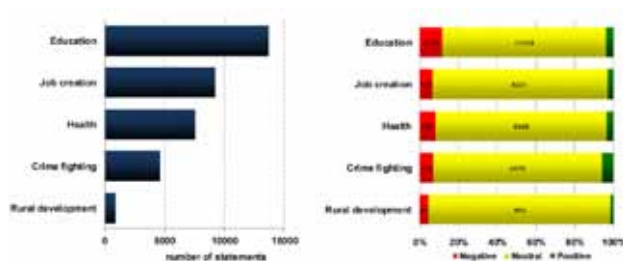
Efforts to improve the quality of basic education have been the focal point for government since the dawn of democracy. This commitment has been matched by the allocation of an increased budget on an annual basis. There are indeed a number of areas where government has made progress. In the 2012 budget vote, Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga said, "The number of learners in no-fee schools exceeds our 60% target and this year, 69,3% of learners are in more than 20 000 no-fee schools." She also said the threshold target allocation for no-fee schools for operational expenditure has increased.

Similarly, as one of the most important priorities of government, education endures extensive scrutiny from all sectors of society, including academics, civil society, political parties and the media.

The volumes in coverage around education tend to peak around the release of the matric results and decline in the middle of the year when attention shifts to other areas of interest.

## How media coverage of education compared with other government priorities

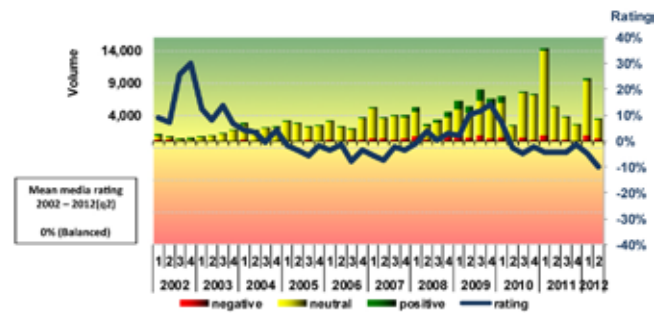
### Priority issue comparison



When compared to the other priorities of government, education has been attracting the largest volumes of coverage. About 10% of coverage of education has been negative.

## Mean rating of education

### Education



Education coverage generally spikes in the first quarter of each year with the commencement of the new school term. In 2012 rating dropped because of strong coverage on the non-delivery of textbooks in Limpopo.

The slide above shows a gradual increase in the volume in coverage over the 10-year period from 2002. The period between 2008 and 2010 enjoyed a remarkable level of positivity, with the mean rating more positive than negative.

However, the decline in the mean rating, which is more evident from around 2010, demonstrates a possible influence from a number of the challenges that have besieged education. The negative rating had stabilised in 2010, but took a downward spiral at the end of 2011. Negativity around the delivery of textbooks in Limpopo, and the issue of temporary teachers in the Eastern Cape received the most negative coverage.

## How the media reported on the top 10 issues in education

This year alone, issues relating to education policy have topped the media agenda, followed by issues relating to basic education.

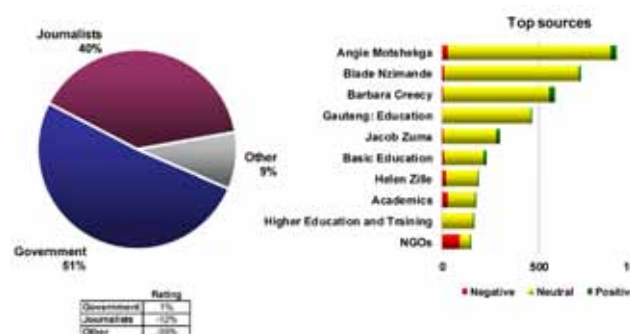
The improvement in the matric results attracted a strong level of positivity, but because this is a seasonal trend, it has now fallen behind other prominent issues of interest. The delivery of textbooks entered the environment only at the end of the first quarter, but is already gaining traction in the top list of issues in the



media agenda with a very high level of negativity accompanying it.

Since the announcement of the intervention in the Eastern Cape Education Department, a number of challenges continue to attract sustained negative media coverage. The re-employment of temporary teachers and the strike that followed as a result of the teacher shortages contributed substantially to the negativity. What also fuelled the debate in the media was varying reports of a large number of schools that were reported to have been closed in the province.

### Sources commenting on the issue



### Education 2012

In education-related issues, which attracted media coverage in the first six months of 2012, government has accounted for 51% of the statements captured, along with the Minister of Basic Education and the Minister of Higher Education. The amount of positivity attributed to government sources gives hope about the way that some of the messages have been captured by the media. While NGOs account for the lowest number of statements, the bulk of those statements have been 35% more negative than positive. This could be the direct result of the criticism from NGOs in Limpopo and the Eastern Cape.

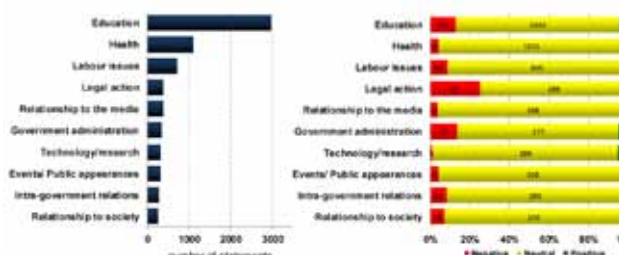
As a source, statements attributed to journalists are 12% more negative than positive.



### Comparison to other issues in the cluster

Within the Human Development cluster, education still emerged at the top of the list of issues that drive coverage.

### Human Development cluster



### Conclusion

While coverage of education issues started positively with the release of the improved matric results, the number of challenges experienced in some provinces has had a negative effect on the overall image of education in South Africa.

Recent reports on non delivery of textbooks have drowned other messages from government and a strategy to highlight success in other areas while dealing with existing challenges could help to slow down the downward spiral on the mean rating.



# Decision makers missing the point

\* By Cathy Grosvenor,  
joint MD, Allycats PR

**W**hen it comes to bread and butter issues affecting specific regions, community media is king.

Yet this giant of the South Africa media landscape is often overlooked by decision makers who choose national communication channels over community titles, thinking they are gaining prestige and widespread exposure, when in fact all they are often doing is missing their market.

Daily newspapers fill a vital role in informing the nation. Complementing them are a network of smaller papers – selling between a few thousand to well over 15 000 copies per issue. Most come out once a week and many average around 24 pages only. So on the face of it, one could be forgiven for choosing dailies with circulation figures of around 100 000. But while dailies must cover vast news areas, community papers are able to provide in-depth news coverage of specific communities. They could be compared to the crack filler holding areas together as opposed to the overcoat of dailies. Both fulfil different roles and both are essential.

The comparatively small reach of community media needs to be put into perspective too. While around 10% of a town's residents might read a specific daily, on average, 70% read their local paper. So when it comes to speaking directly to the people, community papers reign supreme.

John Bowles, joint managing director of the Newspaper Advertising Bureau (NAB), believes freesheets and sold community papers fill a gap in the media landscape.

"With daily and weekend newspaper circulations continuing to decline and media audiences in general fragmenting, government has to be asking which media can get our message to the people best. The hidden giant in print media is community press, delivering an audited circulation of sold and free newspapers across the country in excess of



6 500 000 every week. That's over 50% more than the combined daily and weekend press newspapers! This figure excludes the grassroots community press where most of the independent community newspapers operate and serve!", he says.

Independent research surveys show that even when a community newspaper is delivered free, it is well received and read. On average, 70% of heads of households read their community newspaper every week (source: ROOTS 2010), he adds.

Chantel Erfort, editor of Cape Community Newspapers, believes the future of print media lies in the community press. "People are overloaded with national and international news, but when it comes to finding out about their own community, I believe they still turn to the community press," she says.

Included in the Rural Development Institute's definition of a community newspaper are aspects that highlight why these papers continue to be important to the readerships they serve. According to this definition, community papers not only publish community-specific content, but also content from an internal perspective, allowing communities to communicate with themselves. "So the focus is very much on an intimate account of the news. In our newsroom, most of our reporters live in the areas they cover, which results in them being intimately acquainted with the issues that affect their readerships," Erfort adds.

It seems communicators in other parts of the country should look to the Cape. Generally, Cape Community Newspapers are well supported by local government when it comes to advertising. "Local government

has indicated that up to 50% of the people they have surveyed get their information about the City of Cape Town from community newspapers," Erfort says.



Community press allows decision makers to choose newspapers that fit their departmental communication needs, believes Bowles. "This may be to talk to the poor, the rich, a local area, a region or even the entire nation. When you combine all the community newspapers in the country, you have a media giant that speaks to the heart of all its communities – big or small."

Community newspapers best reach the areas they serve and continue to grow as new newspapers are launched to serve communities that previously did not have their own newspaper.

A former award-winning community journalist who now works as a mayoral spokesman, Zweli Dlamini, is a passionate advocate of the community media.

Speaking in his personal capacity, Dlamini says everyone wants to know what is happening around them and the only media that can give a detailed account of community issues is the community press.

"However, even though this is the case, government in all spheres is struggling to come to terms with the factual reality that the existence of the local media is essential to communicating with the millions of South Africans on the ground. This is clear from the way government's media spend is spread out."

Most government departments, municipalities and provinces believe that a successful media campaign is one that is run through national mediums. "Even bread and butter issues such as the rolling out of social grants are not advertised in the local media – which reaches the targeted market for such messages – but rather in more expensive national mediums that the majority of South Africans cannot afford," Dlamini says.

Apart from those working in local government, communicators in various government spheres often do not bother to issue press releases to community press. This is because they have bench-marked their performances on the number of stories appearing in the national media – regardless of whether the message gets across to the targeted audience or not.

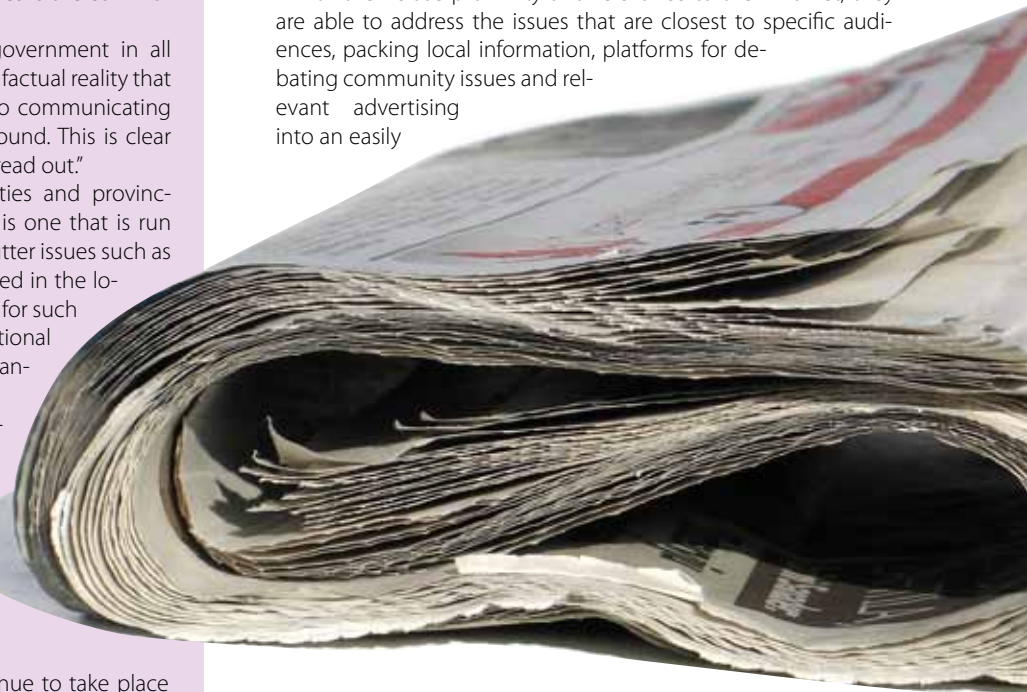
"A number of service-delivery protests continue to take place throughout the country and most are aimed at local government. Various surveys undertaken by experts have pointed to a lack of communication as a key contributory factor to these protests. This finding has also been confirmed by the aggrieved people in their own words as they take to the streets. They claim they never know what the municipalities and government in general are doing," Dlamini says.

He adds that government communicators must understand their agenda, which is to ensure government programmes are communicated thoroughly and that the messages reach the intended audience.

"There may be cases where principals give a certain direction, but it is incumbent on the communicator to advise his principals accordingly, bearing in mind that as a PR person, you are the expert in the field of communication. You are there to ensure that the best mediums and strategies are employed to communicate a particular message, with the main objective being to make sure that the right message reaches its intended recipient," he says.

Once the smallest and possibly least influential form of media, community newspapers and radio stations now cast long shadows. According to the ABC 2011 Fourth Quarter report, total newspaper circulation increased by 114 000 copies compared to the previous quarter. This was mainly the result of increases in free and community newspapers offset by losses in all other categories.

With their close proximity and relevance to their market, they are able to address the issues that are closest to specific audiences, packing local information, platforms for debating community issues and relevant advertising into an easily



accessibly, affordable package. Community media play a vital role in building and maintaining neighbourhoods, reflecting the community and telling its stories, giving communicators access to very valuable niche markets.

*\* Cathy Grosvenor is joint MD of public relations specialist Allycats, and has 23 years' experience in community journalism, most of which were spent as editor of an award-winning weekly publication.*



# Let's talk foreign policy

By Clayson Monyela

**T**he African agenda, African solutions to African problems, conflict resolution, peacemaking and the consolidation thereof, infrastructure development and boosting African intra-trade: all these are topical issues in our country as analysts and commentators debate South Africa's role on the continent and in global affairs.

South Africa's foreign policy is conducted on the basis of principles, values and national interests. It is underpinned by the promotion of human rights, democracy and the pursuit of the African agenda – embodied in the Freedom Charter of 1955.

Over the last couple of years, South Africa has registered his-



torical diplomatic successes – these include our inclusion in the powerful and influential BRICS bloc (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), the return to the United Nations Security Council, and the successful Presidency of the United Nations (UN) Climate Change Conference or COP17/CMP7. With Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane as COP17 President, not only did the conference secure a second commitment period to the Kyoto Protocol, but the Durban Outcome has been hailed the world over as having restored trust in the UN Climate Change Convention process.

More recently, driven by the objective of transforming the African Union (AU) into an efficient and effective continental body, the southern African region nominated and successfully lobbied for the election of its candidate as the AU Commission (AUC) Chairperson. Minister Nkoana-Mashabane led a team of Southern African Development Community (SADC) ministers in criss-crossing the continent lobbying for the candidate.

It was a great victory for South African diplomacy, a victory for southern Africa and Africa, when Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma was elected as the new chairperson of the AUC. The southern African candidate and one of South Africa's longest serving cabinet ministers became the first woman to lead the powerful AUC. Strengthening African unity and advancing the transformation of

the continent will be among the things Dr Dlamini Zuma will strive for as the head of the AU.

To ensure that our foreign policy is understood, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) has added to its arsenal of communication products.

Not only is the department facebooking, tweeting and you-tubing, releasing a minimum of two statements per day, having at least one media briefing per week, placing opinion pieces, and interacting daily with newspapers and radio stations, it has also started a weekly electronic newsletter – *The Diplomat News Flash* – an extension of the department's internal monthly publication *The Diplomat*.

To extend its reach to external stakeholders, the department has launched a brand-new quarterly glossy magazine called *UBUNTU, diplomacy in action*. This is DIRCO's first externally focused magazine that guides readers in understanding the country's foreign policy. The magazine targets embassies (currently 127), stakeholders, government officials, business, labour, civil society, think-tanks, academia, students and practitioners of international relations. The concept for the name was derived from the Draft White Paper on South Africa's Foreign Policy. The magazine is funded by the department. Advertising is part of the list of sponsorship benefits DIRCO sponsors receive when they sponsor public diplomacy activities (events, marketing and advertising campaigns, etc.).

In addition to the new magazine, DIRCO is in the final stages of establishing Africa's first government-run online radio station – Ubuntu Radio, South Africa's diplomacy in action. The station will be Internet-based and will broadcast content about South Africa's foreign policy to a global audience, 24 hours a day.

The radio programming will focus on the execution of South Africa's international relations and the effect thereof on ordinary South Africans. It will be a strategic platform to explain the rationale behind our positions on major global affairs and serve as a platform for South Africans to engage in dialogue about our foreign policy, its direction, objectives and execution. It will also serve as a platform to position Brand South Africa globally.

So, if you have an interest in foreign policy, log on, tune in or turn the page. We are happy to share.

*\*Clayson Monyela is Deputy Director-General: Public Diplomacy at the Department of International Relations and Cooperation*

