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JOURNOS JUST WANT TO HAVE FUNDS

RESEARCH INTO THE IMPACT OF DONOR FUNDING ON THE CONTENT PRODUCED BY BHEKISISA CENTRE FOR HEALTH JOURNALISM AT THE *MAIL & GUARDIAN*

Pontsho Pilane

An independent research report submitted to the Department of Journalism and Media Studies in the Faculty of Humanities, University of Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Journalism and Media Studies.

Johannesburg, Republic of South Africa,

15 March 2018

Declaration

I declare that the work submitted in this research is my own unaided work except where I have explicitly indicated otherwise. It is submitted for the degree of Master's of Journalism and Media Studies in the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

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Pontsho Pilane

__15th__ day of __March__, 2018

Dedicated to

Moloko Annah Pilane

22 February 1936 – 21 July 2005

and

Kgomotso Mary Molapisi

5 May 1938 – 3 October 2004

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, Modimo O mogolo, a tlhompo le pako di eswe go Ene.

Thank you to my parents, Kedibone and Matlhomola Pilane, for believing in me. Thank you for the sacrifices you made to ensure that we had the opportunities that you were denied. May I forever be the vision you entrusted God with.

To my sister, Refiloe Mongoegi, ke a leboga sa mma. Thanks for being my deputy parent and for finally conceding that I am, in fact, the smarter sister. Most importantly, ke lebogela Njabulo, who has made me the coolest aunt in the world.

To my sister friend and soulmate, Komape Ngoepe. Thelma to my Louise, Abby to my Olivia, Gail to my Oprah, the Cristina to my Meredith. O mogwera wa makgonthe.

To my life partner, Bonga Ntshingila, whose unwavering support and encouragement held me together, and who tirelessly listened to my ideas about the research and helped me in every way possible: Ngiyabonga ngiyancocoza, Mabele.

To Motho wa ka, Nomantshali Bodlela, thank you for your infinite wisdom and guidance. Thokoza Gogo.

My sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Alan Finlay, who was patient and insightful. Your knowledge and expertise have taught me new ways of thinking.

Thanks to Nic Dawes, Bhekisisa and *Mail & Guardian* team, and the GIZ and Gates Foundation officers for being so generous with their time for interviews. A special thanks to Sewela Mamphiswana, my work mother and the *Mail & Guardian* librarian for helping me access the archives and feeding me when I was too stressed to think about it.

To Milisuthando Bongela, Mosibudi Ratlebjane, Rendani Rabambi, Boitumelo Makaulule, Khadija Patel, Prinola Govenden, Athandiwe Saba, Matsie Molope, Makungu Baloyi, Lebohang Masango, Danielle Bowler, Nomvula Garrine, Meladi Montjane, Itumeleng Mathopa and Thuto Mahole João, thank you for always being the flowers in my garden.

Finally, thanks to Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) Media Africa for awarding me the scholarship that made this research possible.

Abstract

This research considers how the funded health journalism produced by Bhekisisa Centre for Health Journalism impacts on the news agenda at the *Mail & Guardian.* In doing so, it aims to contribute to understandings of how donor-funded journalism impacts on its editorial choices. Bhekisisa – currently funded by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation – was established in 2013 and serves as the primary vehicle for health journalism content at the *Mail & Guardian.* Although the research is based on a single case study, Bhekisisa offers an important opportunity to clearly consider how *Mail & Guardian*'s health coverage may have changed after receiving donor funds. The research was conducted through a content analysis of the paper's health pages before and after Bhekisisa was established, and by interviewing key people involved in the formation of Bhekisisa and present editorial decision-makers at Bhekisisa and *Mail & Guardian.* The findings of this study argue that donors do have an impact on the health issues Bhekisisa reports on; this should be considered as subtle editorial influence that comes in the form of soft power. The findings support arguments made elsewhere that donors influence news content and media organisations are subtly persuaded into aligning themselves with their donors' agendas and values. However, in the context of health journalism – which is both time-consuming and expensive to produce – donor funding plays a pivotal and positive role. Because newsrooms do not produce their ideal publications, donors enable this. Furthermore, in the case of health journalism, there is a skewed sense of newsworthiness in South African media, which means that it can be lower on the newsworthiness scale. There are some indications that donor-funded health news may challenge this preconception.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The global media industry continues to face critical economic challenges. Research shows that the traditional business model which journalism has depended on is under serious threat and will most unlikely recover (Picard 2003, 130). The traditional forms of media consumption and interaction, particularly in the print sector, continue to rapidly decline (Franklin 2012, 668). South Africa is not immune to the impact of this global media climate. The circulation of print media continues to be on the decline, many newsrooms have downscaled through retrenchments and digitisation makes it a difficult environment for profit-making. In 2015 and 2016, print circulation in South Africa continued to decline, with the *Mail & Guardian* being the only weekly newspaper to achieve a quarter-on-quarter growth of nearly 10% in 2015 (State of the Newsroom 2017,1). In the past decades, traditional forms of media were able to financially sustain themselves through selling advertising space and subscriptions (Franklin 2012, 670), but this has been slowed down and threatened by the digitisation of newsrooms and changes in the ways the public consumes media. The media sector has made efforts to monetise online advertising, but the profits are only a margin of those accrued through print (Edmonds, et al. 2013, 14).

While journalism frantically searches for a sustainable model that will bring financial stability to the industry, donor-funded models of journalism are increasingly becoming popular. By donor-funding, I mean non-profit news organisations that receive grants from foundations and other non-profit organisations in order to produce news. The instability of the economic machine of journalism has resulted in the emergence of non-profit journalism – first in the United States (US), United Kingdom (UK) and now globally. The impact and influence media owners and advertisers have on editorial decisions has been well researched, but there are limited studies on how philanthropic organisations can have editorial influence. Over recent years there has been an increase in non-traditional ways of funding journalism; this includes crowdfunding and foundations directly funding media organisations.

Donor-funded journalism is mostly found in niche journalism beats – such as health, development and science – which are often overlooked by mainstream newsrooms due to limited staff, time and costs (Schiffrin 2017, 12). Journalism in general is important,

but health journalism holds an important position within mass media. It has potential impact on the public's health and wellbeing (Stassen 2016, 10). Media is highly instrumental in shaping policies about various issues such as health (Leask, Hooker and King 2010, 2). Research also shows that most people rely on the media for health-related information. (Shuchman and Wilkes 1997, 980).

Health journalism is particularly important in a developing country like South Africa due to the country's burden of disease and overworked public health system. The latest Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) national HIV household survey found that South Africa had 469 000 new HIV infections in 2012 (Shisana , et al. 2014, xxxii). Communicable, maternal, neonatal, and nutritional diseases as well as non-communicable diseases and injuries are the leading causes of most deaths and disabilities in South Africa (Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation 2018). Furthermore, Barron and Padarath (2017, 4) note that there is a "chronic shortage of medical personnel in the public-health sector in South Africa". These factors, coupled with the country's poverty and massive inequality, are indicative of the important role the media places in informing the public. Scholars have argued that health journalism is a primary source of informing the public about personal and public health. (Hinnant and Len-Ríos 2009, 85). Conditions such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB) and various non-communicable diseases are a daily concern for many people living in South Africa.

But reporting on health can be difficult. Journalists are tasked with reading and understanding scientific research and reporting it in a simple yet scientifically accurate manner to the public (Stassen 2016, 26). Moreover, it is often undervalued in terms of newsworthiness. Speciality or niche reporting, like health journalism, is also costly and time-consuming (Wright, Scott and Bunce 2018, 1). Thoroughly researched reports on global development issues like health, immigration issues and food insecurity are not profitable (Wright, Scott and Bunce 2018, 3). These topics do not attract mass audiences or secure advertising from luxury brands, which is often how media outlets make their profits.

As revenues continue to dwindle, this type of journalism is often the first to be cut when news organisations are restructuring and down-scaling. This can result in speciality units becoming non-profit organisations that are funded through philanthropic foundations (Bunce 2016; Schiffrin 2017). The lack of resources, skills and the extent to which health

is considered newsworthy are reasons donor-funding is common in this speciality beat. There is a disconnect between scientists and the media, with the former viewing journalists as sensational and irresponsible in the ways they report about scientific and health information (Claassen 2011, 357). Claassen suggests that setting up science desks staffed with trained science journalists and editors will result in a higher calibre of science reporting. South Africa has seen its fair share of media reports on health issues gone wrong. For example, in 2002 the South African media reported that two children were killed by the diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (DTP) vaccine (Baleta 2006, 12). However, medical investigations revealed there was no link between the vaccine and the deaths. The media coverage resulted in, Baleta argued, the public's decreased confidence in immunisation programmes and a "loss of trust in public health scientists and officials and in the media". Similarly, in April 2006 *The Citizen* newspaper ran an opinion piece by David Rasnick and Sam Mhlongo, two doctors who were known for their Aids denialism (Jacobs and Johnson 2007, 132). The opinion piece claimed that HIV could not be transmitted by heterosexual people. When confronted by HIV activists about the potential harm such an article could cause, the editor responded to criticism by claiming "free debate" and labelled those questioning the writers' opinion as "fanatical". Malan (2003, 5) further argues that the lack of trained health journalists during the Aids dissident era in South Africa was the reason behind the politically charged – instead of health-related - content around HIV. She posits that the "South African media was completely unprepared" for HIV reporting. Leask, Hooker and King (2010, 1473) argue that "time constraints, lack of resources and technical expertise continue to be the major issues for journalists to produce high quality health and medical stories". Furthermore, producing news stories about international development and health is expensive and these types of stories are easily disregarded by mainstream media (Bunce 2016, 18).

In her research investigating the quality of health reporting in six South African daily newspapers, Stassen (2016, 74) finds that health reporters adequately grasped the scientific data of studies and avoided disease mongering, but the standard of reporting on new medical research needs to be improved. These financial constraints and the sensationalised reporting on HIV/AIDS at the time resulted in the conceptualisation of a donor-funded health reporting initiative called the HIV/AIDS and the Media Project (Palitza, et al. 2010). Among many other activities, the project offered fellowships to working journalists where they would focus on in-depth research and receive training on

how to report on complex health issues. Another response to South Africa's poor health reporting was Health-e News Services, a donor-funded television and print health news service that started in 1999 (Health-e News 2017). Health-e News content is syndicated through various media outlets in South Africa like Media24, Daily Maverick, SABC, eTV and the Independent Newspapers. It is currently funded by Global Health Advocacy Incubator, OpenSociety Foundation SA, UK-based grant making foundation Indigo Trust and DG Murray Trust.

It is in this context that I locate Bhekisisa, which is a donor-funded health news organisation at the *Mail & Guardian*. I would like to understand how health news at the *Mail & Guardian* was previously and is currently produced and how the introduction of donor funds has influenced the health reporting.

1.1 Overview

The following sub-sections will give an overview of the various media organisations and foundations that are pivotal to the study. The main aim of this section is to give historical context that enables one to understand how the *Mail & Guardian*, Bhekisisa and its donors operate separately and together.

1.1.1 *Mail & Guardian*

The *Mail & Guardian* is a weekly national paper in South Africa. It publishes on Fridays and focuses on political analysis, investigative reporting, and other Southern African issues. The paper was launched in 1985 and was previously known as the *Weekly Mail* (Mail & Guardian 2018). It was started by a group of journalists who were retrenched when two newspapers, *Rand Daily Mail* and *Sunday Express* closed down.

The *Weekly Mail* was popularly known for criticising apartheid government policies, which often led to state-sanctioned legal action and even a suspension of the publication in 1988. In 1993, the paper was renamed *Weekly Mail & Guardian* (Mail & Guardian 2018). The Guardian Media Group, publishers of *The Guardian* in London became the majority shareholders in 1995. Through the Newtrust Company Botswana Limited, Zimbabwean media entrepreneur, Trevor Ncube, acquired 87.5% of the company in 2002. He later became its chief executive officer (Mail & Guardian 2018).

In 2017 the New York-based non-profit organisation Media Development Investment Fund (MDIF) became the majority shareholder of M&G Media Limited. MDIF provides low-cost financing to independent news organisations. It has been involved in the paper since 2003 when it granted a loan to the organisation after it was purchased by Ncube. The current editor-in-chief of the *Mail & Guardian* is Khadija Patel. According to the paper's website, it is South Africa's "leading investigative publication, a forum for debate about the country and its politics, and a provider of the top arts and culture coverage".

In 1994, *Mail & Guardian* became the first news publication in Africa to go online (Mail & Guardian 2018). Previously known as *Electronic Mail & Guardian,* M&G Online was initially a subscription service for readers who lived outside South Africa to receive the stories in the print publication. The *Mail & Guardian* website was added as an online space for the weekly newspaper to exist beyond Fridays, but later transformed into generating

its own daily content. Both the online and print teams of the *Mail & Guardian* operate from its head offices in Johannesburg, South Africa.

There is extensive research that has been done on health coverage in South African print media, most of the research focused on HIV/AIDS reporting (Campbell and Gibbs 2008, Gibbs 2010, Finlay 2004, Trengove Jones 2011, Palitza, et al. 2010). The general observation of this body of work is that media coverage of HIV/AIDS during the epidemic was politicised. Campbell and Gibbs (2008, 205) found that print media "locates the power to address HIV and AIDS in a top-down way". Between October 2004 and September 2006, the *Mail & Guardian* had the largest proportional coverage of HIV as compared with *Sowetan*, *Business Day* and *Sunday Times*. (Gibbs 2010, 1622). He found that 2.76% of the paper's articles involved HIV and 15% of those articles focused on gender and HIV. But the paper's reporting on HIV was not without problems. Trengove Jones (2001, 43) posits that the media's coverage of HIV/AIDS replicated "stereotypical associations that underpin and perpetuate prejudice [and stigma]". He argues: "Speculation [about the death of presidential spokesperson Parks Mankahlana] in the media – especially the *Mail & Guardian* – was that Mankahlana had died of an AIDS-related illness." Citing its coverage of HIV lobby group, the Treatment Action Campaign's (TAC) report on roll-out of antiretrovirals (ARVs) published in July 2004, Finlay (2004, 79) argues the newspaper did not interrogate the report or the TAC. He also found that the *Mail & Guardian* had the highest HIV content count of all weekly newspapers. Similarly, in their study analysing how the South African press report on children affected by HIV/AIDS, Meintjies and Bray (2005, 149) found that *Mail & Guardian* was the leading weekly newspaper to report on the issue. Of the 114 articles examined for their study, only five directly sourced children or young people. Observing children, Meintjies and Bray argue, allowed the reporter to "provide nuanced information about HIV/AIDS".

Health supplements and advertorials are common in *Mail & Guardian.* In 2004, the *Mail & Guardian* published a 16-page supplement that focused on HIV/AIDS in the workplace (Finlay 2004, 90). Some of the advertisers were Anglo American, Eskom, ABSA, Transnet, BMW and Vodacom. The newspaper has had supplements that focused on other health issues such as biomedical research, TB and improving public health systems; these were paid by the national department of health. Until the launch of Bhekisisa, most of the health coverage was in the form of supplements. One of the sample periods of this study is a

weekly four-page supplement that was paid for by Bonitas medical aid scheme. But unlike traditional forms of advertorials and supplements where the commercial department commissions the articles that will be in the supplement, the content during the Bonitas period was prepared by the paper's editorial team – with exception to the fourth page which was an advertorial. Bhekisisa has also partnered with the commercial team to produce three supplements in the past two years which focused on decriminalising sex work, HIV and TB.

1.1.2 Bhekisisa Centre for Health Journalism

The Bhekisisa Centre for Journalism is a registered non-profit news organisation that operates as the health desk of the *Mail & Guardian*. Bhekisisa, which is an isiZulu word meaning "to scrutinise", produces in-depth, analytical coverage of health and social justice issues in Africa (Bhekisisa 2017). Its target audiences are policy and decision-makers like "high level politicians, cabinet ministers, academics, influential activists and non-governmental organisations (NGOs)" (Malan, 2018). Bhekisisa was launched in January 2013 through a public-private partnership between *Mail & Guardian* and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). That meant that the cost of running the unit, such as salaries and a budget to travel for stories, would be split in half between the newspaper and GIZ. In September 2015, Bhekisisa secured a second donor, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which led to the organisation expanding its health coverage to the rest of Africa. Bhekisisa operates both independently and dependently of the *Mail & Guardian*. It has its own website that is fully integrated into the *Mail & Guardian's* and it has its own budget separate to that of other desks. However, Bhekisisa is based in the same building as *Mail & Guardian* and uses common resources such as photographers and cars to travel to stories.

This study has chosen to focus on one case study, Bhekisisa, and will make use of a variety of quantitative and qualitative research methods to establish how Bhekisisa as a unique organisation – both in terms of its funding model and beat – makes decisions in terms of content. My approach will also be ethnographic by drawing on insider knowledge. I plan to investigate health journalism as "a lived culture, with its own rituals, beliefs and identity positions" (Cowling 2005, 2).

Bhekisisa has two designated health pages in the weekly print edition of the paper. Currently, it is the largest specialist editorial desk at the *Mail & Guardian.* It has seven full-time staff members: a health editor, health news editor, senior multimedia journalist and three health journalists. The unit also has an Africa editor who works from London and is in charge of editing the stories written by freelance journalists from the African continent (Bhekisisa 2017).

1.1.3 Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit

GIZ is an international development agency that is operated by the German government. It does work across the world, having keen interests in environmental protection, social inclusion and economic development. According to its website, "capacity building" is GIZ's core function (GIZ, 2016).

"GIZ supports people in acquiring specialist knowledge, skills and management expertise. We help organisations, public authorities and private businesses to optimise their organisational, managerial and production processes. And, of course, we advise governments on how to achieve objectives and implement nationwide change processes by incorporating them into legislation and strategies." (GIZ, 2016)

The agency's relationship with South Africa began in 1993 and its key interests in the country are:

- Governance and administration;
- Energy and climate; and
- HIV and Aids

GIZ's interest in HIV prevention is the reason it became Bhekisisa's initial donor, through a public-private partnership that began in 2013. GIZ does not fund organisations for its core work; Bhekisisa developed a fellowship programme to ensure that it wasn't being funded for producing health news.

1.1.4 Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

The Gates Foundation was founded by philanthropists Bill and Melinda Gates. It was founded in 2000 and is one of the largest private foundations in the world. The Foundation's global priorities are healthcare, reducing poverty and development at large.

The Gates Foundation provides large amounts of money in the form of grants to journalists and news organisations that report on development (Bunce 2016, 8). Some of The Foundation's media grants are targeted at health reporting. *The Guardian's* development section, *The Guardian Development*, as well as US-based National Public Radio are funded by the Foundation. The grants have, Bunce (2016, 3) argues, increased the visibility of health news within development media, particularly neglected diseases and crises.

According its website, the Foundation has four main interests in South Africa:

- Development of new drugs, diagnostics and vaccines for HIV and TB;
- HIV and TB prevention;
- Collaboration with the South African government for global health and development; and
- Family health, agriculture, water sanitation, and hygiene.

The Gates Foundation started funding Bhekisisa in 2015, which led to the organisation expanding coverage across Africa and hiring an Africa editor.

1.1.5 Bonitas Medical Aid Scheme

Bonitas medical aid is a fully registered South African medical aid scheme that was established in 1983 (Bonitas 2018). Bonitas has several corporate social investment (CSI) initiatives and sponsorships which are concerned with "promoting health and wellness and making healthcare accessible to more people". Its most popular CSI initiative is *Bonitas House Call,* a medical television talk show that airs on Saturday mornings on the public service broadcaster since 2008 (Bonitas 2018). According to the show's website, it discusses "topics that seek to educate, inform and advise on health matters", issues such as "lifestyle diseases, mental health and severe illnesses" (Bonitas House Call, 2018). The medical aid scheme also sponsors the Comrades Marathon, Just In Case - which is a

programme that teaches children basic first aid and road safety tips - and a programme that teaches family practitioners new medical skills such as the “latest procedural developments and treatment guidelines” called The Bonitas Academy.

1.2 Aim

This research report investigates how funded health journalism produced by Bhekisisa impacts on the news agenda at the *Mail & Guardian.* It uses both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to investigate the relationship between Bhekisisa and its donors, GIZ and Gates Foundation. It compares these results to the period before donors established Bhekisisa, when health content at the *Mail & Guardian* was sponsored by an advertiser. It conducts a content analysis to assess how much of the content produced by Bhekisisa is aligned to the interests and strategic objectives of its donors.

In a series of interviews, the study explores the motivations and interests of the donors, considering if and how donors influence editorial decisions on health content at the newspaper. Through critically analysing how funding health journalism furthers the aims and objectives of GIZ and Gates Foundation and how this fits into the donors' broader development agenda, this study aims to contribute to understandings of how donor-funded journalism can influence the mainstream media's sense of newsworthiness and impact on its editorial choices.

1.3 Rationale

Most of the research that has been done on non-profit news organisations raises the concern for editorial independence (Bunce 2016). Funding for these non-profit news organisations is often provided by private foundations and these organisations depend heavily on these grants to operate and stay afloat (Schiffrin 2017). Research on the implications of donor funding for media organisations is limited and often focuses on "theoretical critiques or discussion of anecdotal evidence" (Scott, Bunce and Wright 2017, 165). Furthermore, there have been various studies focused on non-profit journalism in the UK and US (Bunce 2016, Edmonds, et al. 2013, Scott, Bunce and Wright 2017, Schiffrin 2017). This study adds to the ever-increasing body of work that investigates how donors may influence the news organisations they fund.

Browne (2010, 890) posits that there is not enough systematic content analysis on foundation-funded journalism or ethnographic research exploring it. However, in recent years, Westphal 2009, Bunce 2016, Schiffrin 2017, and Wright, Scott and Bunce 2018 have investigated specific case studies of donor-funded news. This study adds to this

body of work by utilising ethnographic and content analysis research methods on a case study. Moreover, little research has been done to investigate the implications of donor funds on South African news outlets. The literature that exists mostly focuses on South African media's coverage of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. This research seeks to provide a better understanding of how funders and grantees relate to each other and how each constituent's agendas are being served through the content that is produced in South Africa.

The case study method is suitable for this research because it allows for topics to be defined broadly and allows a researcher to rely on more than one source of evidence (Yin 1993, xi). Case studies also help highlight the qualitative aspects of a subject, yield multiple perspectives and make it easy to generalise from a single case (Simons 2009, 455). Bhekisisa is a suitable case study for this research because it offers a "before" and "after" picture of donor funding as well as the staged introduction of two donors, which is also another way to test agenda-setting through a content analysis. This is the key aspect of this research.

It can be argued that research with a single case study has scholarly value. For example, in the case of Cowling's research on *Sowetan,* in which she briefly explains that the scholarly value of *Sowetan* as a single case study was due to "the important role the newspaper played in black public life in South Africa in a significant period of its history" (Cowling 2005, 5). Furthermore, the *Mail & Guardian* is one of South Africa's leading and most influential newspapers with a readership of 27 766 in the third quarter of 2017 (State of the Newsroom Report, 2018). Serino (2009), who researched the *Sunday Times* newspaper's opinion pages, argues that the newspaper's influence has the ability set the agenda for discussion and influence what the public deems important. Premised on Serino, I argue the same for the *Mail & Guardian*. The newspaper's history as the first African newspaper to go online contributed to its national and continental readership; until 2016 it even had offices in Nairobi, Kenya. It is also known for providing informative discussions on various issues facing Africa (Alozie, 2005). Furthermore, Bhekisisa is one of only two donor-funded health news organisations in South Africa and simultaneously operates as a news desk of a traditional newsroom at the *Mail & Guardian* – these two distinct features make it a unique case study. This allows me to make conclusions and findings that can be applied to donor-funded news organisations and in newsrooms

generally that may in the future need to pursue donor funds to stay afloat as revenue continues to decrease in South Africa and globally.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What is the impact of donor funding on health reporting at the *Mail & Guardian*?

2. How does health coverage at the *Mail & Guardian* prior to the introduction of donor funding compare to the periods where the paper's health desk, Bhekisisa, received funding?

3. What issues are covered in the Bhekisisa health section, and can these be linked to the stated objectives of the donors?

4. Given this, what can be said generally about the impact of donor funding on news?

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

The study explores the impact of donor funding on the health pages of the *Mail & Guardian* newspaper, known as Bhekisisa Centre for Health Journalism, and is concerned with how receiving funding from these donors influences the news agenda. In determining the news content produced by Bhekisisa, it is important to find out how it is produced and what influences the topics it covers. The media influences public debate and the decisions that news organisations make about what is important influence what the public regards as important (McCombs 2004, xi). This section will draw on two theories – critical political economy and agenda setting – to explain how Bhekisisa's donors impact on the content in *Mail & Guardian's* health pages.

2.1 Critical Political Economy

Critical political economy is concerned with the process and outcome of news production and "the economic foundation of the news organization" (Schudson 2002, 251). Critical political economy seeks to understand and explain how media content is produced and the factors that influence its production. This theoretical framework enables scholars to understand the impact of "the commercial imperative to generate revenue on the media's ability to fulfil their assigned role" (Mawson 2011, 13). Political economy theorists argue that profits are deemed more important than accurate, good quality news – even in a free market media environment (Mawson 2011, 12). This increases the likelihood of news organisations prioritising profitmaking over public interest and this results in "the global balance power being shifted decisively toward commercial systems," Herman and Chomsky (1998, xv) argue. They further posit that news outlets satisfy the needs of advertisers in order to ensure their revenue streams. According to Branston and Stafford (2003, 439), critical political economy merges political and economic theoretical frameworks to understand how media organisations work. Political economy analyses the funding and financing of media organisations (Golding & Murdock 2000, 78).

This study attempts to gain a deeper understanding of the power that is exercised by Bhekisisa's donors – if there is any power to be exercised. Downing (2004, 310) argues that critical political economy of the media research attempts to understand the media's

relationship with economic factors. This theory as a framework also discusses the relationship between power and how it operates within media institutions (Golding and Murdock 2000, 73). When focusing on news content production, it is important to note that the media needs funding and relies on a funding model to ensure it can regularly produce its content. To economically survive, Price (2003, 60) argues that this content is often directly related to the interests of funders. Furthermore, Zhang (2010, 210) argues that a media organisation is measured through its content and the economic machinery that enables it to produce content, thus showing the direct relationship of news production and its funding. That is, if there are no funds within a media organisation, it will fail to produce content.

There is a plethora of work that has been done on the impact of ownership in the media. Golding and Murdock (2003, 71) argue that owners have an influence on the editorial perspectives of their media outlets. However, critical political economy approach acknowledges the agency of editors and journalists – they make independent choices but these are made within limitations that are "structured by the unequal distribution of material and symbolic resources" (Golding and Murdock 2003, 73). The critical political economy approach interrogates the level of agency and editorial independence of gatekeepers of the media.

The critical political economy approach to the media is pivoted on the study of ownership, privatisation and commercialisation (Olorunnisola 2014, 56). Olorunnisola further argues that forms of non-direct ownership can be exercised by organisations that are powerful enough to influence the operations of a newsroom. This is certainly the case when it comes to commercial news media. Non-profit news outlets, however, produce a 'hybrid' mode of media ownership between commercial and public service media (Scott, Bunce and Wright 2017, 164). Benson (2016, 3) posits that there are four ways that owners exercise power in news organisations:

1. *Business instrumentalism,* where owners advance their economic interests by influencing journalists to produce (or avoid producing) news content related to the owners' interest.

2. *Political instrumentalism*, which is similar to business instrumentalism, but instead, owners advance their political interests through the news organisation. Owners do this through direct editorial control or through self-censorship (Scott, Bunce and Wright 2017, 164).

3. *Public service orientation*, when owners invest in "reporting and commentary that serves normative ideals of accountability, diversity, public participation, and comprehensiveness". This use could be economically or politically detrimental to the news organisation (Benson 2016, 2).

4. *Market adjustment,* where journalists are made to focus on ways of generating financial revenue by creating news content that "appeals to a demographic that is particularly attractive to advertisers" (Scott, Bunce and Wright 2017, 166).

Benson (2016, 3) argues that ownership power is determined by "the logics of the field that the media owner comes from" and "the logics of the journalistic field". Using Benson's premises and definitions of ownership, Scott, Bunce and Wright (2017, 167) argue that these forms of owner power can also apply to donors because they often act as the ultimate gatekeeper of finances. They posit that donor funding provides non-profit news organisations – which are often focused on niche beats – with resources to produce content that is important and often not profit-generating. Nee (2011, 116) found that most heads of donor-funded non-profit news outlets said donor funds gave them the "freedom to choose stories based on merit and public impact rather than popularity," because there was no pressure to generate more traffic. Furthermore, Benson's notions of power can also be applied to donor funding in what Schiffrin (2017, 14) calls "soft pressure by commission", which she defines as when donor money comes with conditions (such as what issues to report on or how to report on those issues). The "soft pressure" described by Schiffrin can be likened to soft power, which is defined as "getting others to want the same outcomes you want" (Nye 2008, 2). The theory of soft power is applied mostly in foreign policy, in cases where powerful states have the ability to influence less powerful states' decisions. Breslin (2011, 10) argues, "soft power is conceived as the idea that others will align themselves to you and your policy preferences because they are attracted to your political and social system, values and policies". In the

case of this study and notions of soft power, powerful states represent donors and the less powerful states represent news outlets.

Golding and Murdock (2000, 92) argue that media owners are increasingly influencing editorial decisions. Because the ownership – and therefore control – over news production is concentrated in the hands of a few rich individuals or organisations, their ideologies and views are heavily represented in the media. Research shows there are a few organisations that fund non-profit journalism, particularly newsrooms that focus on niche beats like development and health (See Schiffrin 2017; Bunce 2016; Wright, Scott and Bunce 2018). With this premise, foundations such as the Gates Foundation are in the position to exercise the same power as media owners. One of the goals of the Gates Foundation is to increase the media's coverage of health, neglected diseases and development issues. Bunce (2016, 8) found that the Foundation's funding has indeed increased the visibility of health within development media. For example, an analysis by Media Impact Funders shows that between 2010 and 2014, about 23% of foundation funding was channelled into "journalism, news, and information", with the purpose of directly influencing the production of journalistic content on a topic of importance to the donor (Schiffrin 2017, 3). Close to 30% of the grants aimed to influence news agendas indirectly, for example, through training journalists on how to report on a specific issue (Schiffrin 2017, 3). The Gates Foundation gave a US $1-million grant for Nieman fellowships in global health reporting at Harvard University and funds HIV Prevention Reporting Fellowships in sub-Saharan Africa (Bunce 2016, 8). The Foundation also sponsors *The Guardian's* global development unit (Bunce 2016, 8).

The ways in which media organisations are funded and the different ways they are owned are important to critical political economy (Van Tonder 2010, 23). But Scott, Bunce and Wright (2017, 164) argue that the existing literature on donor-funded media organisations is often anecdotal and offers contradictory analyses on the influence of donors in the news organisations they fund. However, they conclude that that "the operation of donor power in this case can be understood through paradigm of 'contradictions'" (Scott, Bunce and Wright 2017, 182).

The political economy framework enables this study to analyse the content produced by Bhekisisa with an understanding of the potential influence its funders may have. The

critical political economic perspectives of the media assume that the process of media production happens as a result of political (ideological) and economic influence. Donor funding is not ownership, but the economic power that funders have over the news organisations they fund is similar to the control and power that owners have on the media outlets they own.

2.2 Agenda-Setting Theory

Agenda-setting is a media effects theory that looks at how media texts influence public debate. It explains news media's capability to influence the topics of public attention (McCombs and Reynolds, 2002, 19). This means that the issues the media frequently covers are what the public and audience will deem important. This does not mean that media tells the audience what to think, but rather, the media informs the audience on "what to think about" (Cohen 1963, 184). Agenda-setting theory looks at what content the media produces and how it is framed. News media creates public awareness and concern on certain issues and the way in which the media attempts to influence public debate and the hierarchy of what is important. Agenda-setting theory is underpinned by two assumptions, argue Dearing and Rogers (1988, 559):

1. News media does not reflect reality, instead, it shapes it.

2. News media focuses on certain issues which in turn influences the public's perception of which issues are more important.

Furthermore, the public doesn't solely rely on news media for information, but they also rely on the media to inform them about what they should deem important, which is dependent on what these news organisations place emphasis on (McCombs 2002, 98). He further posits that "elements prominent on the media agenda become prominent in the public mind". McCombs and Shaw (1972, 180) argue that media influences public opinion and not individual beliefs. While there is no doubt there is a link between the content that the media covered and what the public deemed to be of greater importance (Cohen 1963, McCombs & Shaw 1972, Dearing & Rogers 1988, McCombs 2002, McCombs and Reynolds 2002,), there is no evidence that the media has an effect on how the individual members of the public behave (Serino 2009, 15). McCombs and Reynolds (2009, 5) argue media organisations have the ability to set the agenda but some individuals and organisations are powerful enough to set the agenda as well.

Media scholars' analyses of foundation funding has been contradictory and polarising – with some believing that it provides much needed capital for public service and niche journalism (that isn't tied to commercial pressures) and others raising concerns on donors' influence on editorial decisions and how sustainable the model is to news production (Nee 2011; Edmonds, et al. 2013; Bunce 2016; Scott, Bunce and Wright 2017; Schiffrin 2017; Wright, Scott and Bunce 2018).

Looking specifically at foundation funding for health news, Westphal (2009, 7) argues that there's concern if the coverage (of donor-funded health news organisations) is shaped by the interests of its funders. In his research, Westphal looked at Kaiser Health News which was funded by the Kaiser Family Foundation. The health news outlet was established to "provide coverage that might not otherwise make its way into the news and information sphere" (Westphal 2009, 4). Schiffrin (2017, 3) argues that foundation funders often focus on certain issues within the media space (health, governance, environment). Focusing on and promoting journalism in these areas of interest implies that "these foundations are making decisions for all of us about what problems the public should know about and even pressure governments to fix". This means foundations are involved in agenda-setting and public policy, she argues, and this affects everyone, which is why it matters how donors and journalists negotiate and implement agreements. Schiffrin also notes that foundations are "increasingly underwriting content with a view towards influencing the kinds of subjects that get covered".

Using the Gates Foundation as a case study, Bunce (2016, 8) shows that the Foundation has an advocacy agenda and the news organisations it funds are expected to advance this agenda. Researchers have shown that donors have their own strategic objectives and agendas in mind when they fund news outlets. These agendas could be to change beliefs or create news content focused on certain issues like climate change, health or gender. Bunce (2016, 8) gives the example of the Knight Foundation which seeks to support participatory media and community cohesion. Other funders, Bunce further notes, are interested in funding news that offers a more positive narrative about development in the form of solutions-based journalism. This results in foundations funding news outlets that can further their interests. This kind of funding shows that the agendas of donors' impact on the normative agenda-setting role of the media. But Schiffrin (2017, 10) notes that most donor-funded news outlets partner with foundations that share similar

interests to them. This in turn doesn't influence their agenda, but instead, creates a mutually beneficial relationship.

This study investigates what the agendas of GIZ and Gates Foundation are and if or how they are being implemented through their funding relationship with Bhekisisa. That is, is Bhekisisa's content influenced by its funders' own interests?

2.3 Conclusions

So far, this study has outlined how the two theoretical approaches – critical political economy and agenda-setting – intersect and inform each other in understanding and unpacking donor-funded models of journalism.

Critical political economy looks at how money and power function and influence news production. Benson's ideas of how ownership and control can influence news media's content, and Scott, Bunce & Wright's position that funders function in the same way as owners because in many cases their funds are capital (as in the case of Bhekisisa); political economy of the media enables this study to explore the influence donors may have on their grantees.

Agenda-setting critically discusses the relationship between the media and public opinion and the ability of certain institutions and individuals to influence the news agenda.

This research aims to make connections between the selection of topics in the health pages of the *Mail & Guardian* by Bhekisisa staff members and the process of selecting said topics with the strategic objectives and organisational interests of its donors. This provides a possible intersection between donor interests and news content.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The aim of my research was to identify if and/or how the health issues reported in the online and print editions of the *Mail & Guardian's* health desk were influenced by its two donors. This was done by comparing the coverage before the advent of donor funding at Bhekisisa – a period where health content was sponsored by Bonitas medical aid scheme – and after the partnerships with the two funders, GIZ and Gates Foundation.

3.1 Insider-status as a researcher

Before explaining the research methodologies used in this study, it is important to note that I was a health reporter at Bhekisisa when the research was conducted. Mabweazara (2010, 670) argues that an 'insider-status' not only helps the researcher with rapport, but also to avoid mistakes in a polarised or sensitive context. He notes:

"Ethnography is not just about interviews and observations, but is also very much about informant cultivation … probably the most important part of ethnographic fieldwork" (2010, 671).

According to Bonner and Tolhurst (2002, 15), there are three key benefits to being an insider-researcher:

1. An insider-researcher does not alter the flow of social interaction of the environment that they are researching because they are already known by the participants of the study;

2. The insider-researcher has a greater understanding of the environment and participants because they are already part of it; and

3. This promotes "the telling and the judging of truth".

Furthermore, insider-researchers have a better understanding of the institution's formal and informal systems. Smyth and Holian (2008, 162) argue that insiders have a great deal of institutional and cultural knowledge which would take an outsider a long time, if at all, to acquire. For example, it was easier for me to access the online and print archives of the

health pages because I was already working in *Mail & Guardian*'s offices every day. Being an insider also made it easy for me to schedule interviews with all the relevant people.

But there are disadvantages to being an insider. Unluer (2012, 5) argues that being familiar with an organisation and participants can compromise objectivity and lead to making the wrong assumptions about the research process. The possibility of me gaining access to sensitive material that may harm the participants was also higher than if I were an outsider. To mitigate these disadvantages, Smyth & Holian (2008, 16) recommend that insider-researchers must be conscious of the possible effects of perceived bias on data collection and analysis. Due to my insider-status, the use of content analysis makes the study more objective. In efforts to strengthen the methodology's objectivity, I also selected news articles published before I was employed at the *Mail & Guardian* to negate any possible bias towards my own reporting.

3.2 Research methodologies used

Gunter (1999, 60) states that media scholars have debated the different research methods that allow scholars to make meaningful insights and discoveries within journalism. Quantitative and qualitative research approaches are both acceptable for media and journalism studies research. This study will make use of a quantitative (content analysis) and qualitative method (interviews) of data analysis.

3.2.1 Content Analysis

Krippendorff (2004, 10) defines content analysis as a systematic, replicable technique for "compressing many words of texts into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding". But content analysis is not restricted to just words; Holsti's definition (1969, 7) states that content analysis is any method that makes inferences by "objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages". Content analysis will be done in order to determine the health issues by Bhekisisa and whether it aligns with the strategic objectives of its donors that are briefly stated in Chapter 1. Bryman (2006, 100) states that content analysis as a research methodology "seeks to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories and in a systematic and replicable manner". One of the advantages of this research method, Bryman argues, is that it enables a researcher to

interpret, code and analyse large amounts of media texts. Content analysis is useful in examining trends and patterns in media texts, which is what this study is doing. The content analysis counted the health stories in terms of the type of story, the issues covered and other criteria (see Table 1 below).

		Explanation
TYPE OF STORY	**Narrative**	An article that uses the techniques of feature writing to report. It is descriptive in nature and often has a central case study.
	News	A factual news story that does not use characters and descriptive scenarios. Straightforward news piece.
	Comment	An article that expresses the opinions of a named writer, expert or journalist.
LOCATION	**SA**	The article is about South African topic and people,.
	Non-SA (Africa)	The article is not about South African topic and people, but other African countries.
	Non-SA (World)	The article is not about South African topic and people, but other non-African countries.
THEMES/TOPICS	**Family planning**	Contraceptive information, services, abortions, and supplies.
	HIV	Article that deals with HIV/AIDS.
	TB	Article that deals tuberculosis.
	Malaria	Article that deals with malaria.
	Polio	Article that deals with polio.
	Vaccination	Article that deals with vaccination.
	Other	Any other topic except the ones above.
Ads	**Ad**	There is an advertisement on the page.
	No ad	There is no advertisement on the page.
Paid for	**Advertorial**	The article is labelled advertorial or sponsored feature.
	Not Advertorial	The article is not labelled advertorial or sponsored feature.

Table 1: Definitions and explanations of the categories used in the content analysis. It was also provided to the secondary coder to ensure that her coding was done within the same framework as the primary coding.

Categories for Content Analysis

The periods that were chosen for analysis fall in March to May in three different years. There are three notable changes that have taken place at the *Mail & Guardian's* health desk; this allowed me to analyse health articles in three phases in order to draw conclusions. The time periods that have been selected for the content analysis show *Mail & Guardian's* health coverage without any donors, when Bhekisisa was launched and funded by just GIZ, and when it was funded by GIZ and Gates Foundation.

1. Sample 1: Bonitas Period (March - May 2012)
2. Sample 2: GIZ Period (March - May 2013)
3. Sample 3: GIZ and Gates Period (March - May 2016)

The study used different categories to ensure an in-depth analysis of the content. The first category determined what type of article was produced. That is, whether an article was a narrative feature article, column or opinion piece or news article. This was measured by observing how the article was labelled, its length and the definition of each of the abovementioned terms, which can be found in Table 1.

The second category is location of the article. This category looked at whether the article addresses a South African issue (SA), a non-South African issue from other African countries (Non-SA Africa) or an issue in other parts of the world outside of the continent (Non-SA World).

Thirdly, the content analysis categorised the articles in terms of the health issues or themes. I selected six themes:

- Family planning
- HIV/AIDS
- Tuberculosis
- Malaria
- Vaccinations
- Other (National Health Insurance and non-communicable diseases)

The fourth category measured whether there was an advertisement on the health pages where each article appeared. This category only applied to the print edition of *Mail & Guardian*. This category allowed me to determine if the end of the health supplement during the Bonitas Period correlates with the beginning of donor funding and whether having donor funds diminished the need for the health pages to generate profit through selling advertising space.

The final category determined whether the health pages had a sponsored feature or advertorial; this helped to differentiate the content that was commissioned by the advertiser. This category only applied to the print edition of the health news content because the advertisements were present when going to print, which cannot be guaranteed for the online articles.

The most important part of using content analysis is to ensure that the data collected is accurate (Pilane 2015, 16). Content analysis is reliable as a research methodology because it is a research technique that is objective and systematic (Berelson 1952, 50). However, the data is collected by a human being, so mistakes are likely to happen. Krippendorff (2004, 82) writes: "Generally, 'validity' designates that quality which compels one to accept scientific results as evidence. Its closest relative is 'empirical truth'· As such, this definition is too broad to be useful and finer differentiations are called for."

To ensure that the data collected in this research is indeed valid, a secondary coder was required (Pilane 2015, 17). I employed the assistance of a Media Studies honours student to replicate the coding using the same coding framework as I did. The discrepancies that occurred between the two coding frameworks were discussed and corrected accordingly.

While content analysis is a reliable method to yield results about Bhekisisa's content, it cannot provide answers about the process involved in making the decisions that influence the content. Serino (2009, 33) argues that content analysis has its own limitations; it does not show how "the process by which selection of the items [articles] is made". To determine and analyse this process, qualitative interviews with former and current decision-makers were also conducted.

Sourcing articles

The news articles were sourced from the *Mail & Guardian*'s archives at its offices in Rosebank, Johannesburg. With the assistance of the publication's librarian, I was granted access to the print archives. The online stories were collected with the assistance of the IT personnel at the newspaper who collated the articles by date of publication and copied links onto a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

3.2.2 Interview Participants

To fully understand the relationship between Bhekisisa and its donors, in-depth interviews were conducted with two senior Bhekisisa staff members, a former programme officer for Bhekisisa from GIZ, the current programme officer for Bhekisisa at Gates Foundation, and the former editor-in-chief of the *Mail & Guardian*.

These participants were selected through analysing their suitability and relevance to Bhekisisa and *Mail & Guardian*. Selecting participants to interview requires a researcher to determine and evaluate how (and if) the participant's involvement is pivotal to the research problem and whether their views and positions influence key decisions. Interviews were conducted with the following individuals:

Mia Malan (MM): Founding director and editor of Bhekisisa. Malan is also the *Mail & Guardian*'s health editor. Under her leadership, Bhekisisa has expanded and grown in South Africa and within the continent.

Laura Lopez Gonzalez (LLG): Bhekisisa's news editor. Lopez Gonzalez is in charge of commissioning opinion pieces from experts in the health sector, editing news stories by reporters and running the bi-weekly diary.

Former GIZ Programme Officer (GIZPO): GIZPO is a medical professional who has a keen interest in the media. He approached Malan about starting a non-profit health news organisation funded by GIZ. He was integral in starting Bhekisisa and was its initial programme officer.

Current Gates Foundation Programme Officer (GFPO): GFPO is a programme officer at the Gates Foundation. He manages the grants the Foundation makes to media outlets and is the programme officer assigned to Bhekisisa.

Nic Dawes (ND): Dawes was the *Mail & Guardian* editor-in-chief from 2009 until the end of 2013. Together with Malan, Dawes helped with establishing Bhekisisa through the public-private partnership with GIZ.

I used a semi-structured interview format so that participants were free to answer in the way they wish while keeping the interview formal and standardised enough to cross compare at a later stage. Each interview lasted a minimum of 30 minutes and a maximum of an hour, was recorded using voice recording device and then stored on a Google Drive cloud and later transcribed for analysis purposes. Most of the interviews were conducted in person, but two were conducted via Skype as participants are based outside of South Africa.

I sought to identify changes of the health content by browsing through, reading and analysing the health pages and website. This assisted in establishing which pages were set aside for health coverage and what issues and themes were most prominent. While doing the textual analysis, I had informal conversations with Mia Malan about the history of Bhekisisa and how it has changed since 2013, when it started. Armed with that knowledge and the insider understanding of Bhekisisa, the content analysis began and was recorded a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

Interviews were transcribed using oTranscribe, a free keyboard-friendly online transcription tool. Each interview was then saved in a Microsoft Word document. I used a simple content analysis to examine and compare the interviews in order to find common themes that helped in answering my research questions.

3.2.3 Ethical considerations

Before interviewing participants, I applied for ethical clearance at university which granted me permission to interview participants. The ethics for approval are appended in Appendix F. Following approval, I then requested interviews with participants via email and in person. Furthermore, I gave each participant an information sheet (Appendix G) and a consent form. There were two kinds of consent forms involved in this study – one for Bhekisisa staff members (Appendix H) that clearly stipulated that they would be anonymous.

3.2.4 Data management

All the data were stored on a secure Google Drive that was connected to my email address and required a password to access. I used Microsoft Excel to count all the occurrences of each category and sub-category and then later used graphs and pie charts to visualise the findings of the coding framework.

3.2.5 Limitations

The study only looked at one case study. Furthermore, I was employed as a health reporter at Bhekisisa during the time of the study. This presents as a conflict of interest.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

The previous chapter explained the research methodologies selected for this study and the rationale for using them. This section will analyse the data that has been collected from the content analysis and one-on-one interviews. The aim of this study is to investigate how the funded health news at the *Mail & Guardian* impacts on the paper's news agenda. It seeks to find how health coverage at the paper prior to the introduction of donor funding compares to the periods where it was receiving funds and whether the issues covered can be linked to the stated strategic objectives of the donors.

4.1 An overview of the *Mail & Guardian* health pages

As stated earlier, the *Mail & Guardian's* health section has been edited by Mia Malan since January 2013 when the paper launched the Bhekisisa Centre for Health Journalism. Bhekisisa was a public-private partnership between the paper and GIZ. In September 2015, as stated in Chapter 1, the Gates Foundation became Bhekisisa's second donor. To understand if or how the health pages have transformed since receiving donor funding, this section of the data analysis of this study is divided into three phases: (1) before donor funds, (2) with one donor (GIZ), and (3) with two donors (GIZ and Gates Foundation).

4.1.1 Bonitas Period: *Mail & Guardian* health pages before any donor funding

The period selected to analyse the paper's health pages prior to receiving donor funding is from March to May 2012. In order to have similar samples for analysis in the two other periods, the same months were selected in the years 2013 and 2016. Prior to the launch of Bhekisisa in January 2013, the *Mail & Guardian* had a weekly pull-out health supplement which was predominantly sponsored by the Bonitas medical aid scheme. The first three pages of the supplement consisted of mostly news stories and a clearly marked advertorial on the last page. Each page of the health supplement had a Bonitas advertisement at the bottom of the page (see Figures 1 and 2).

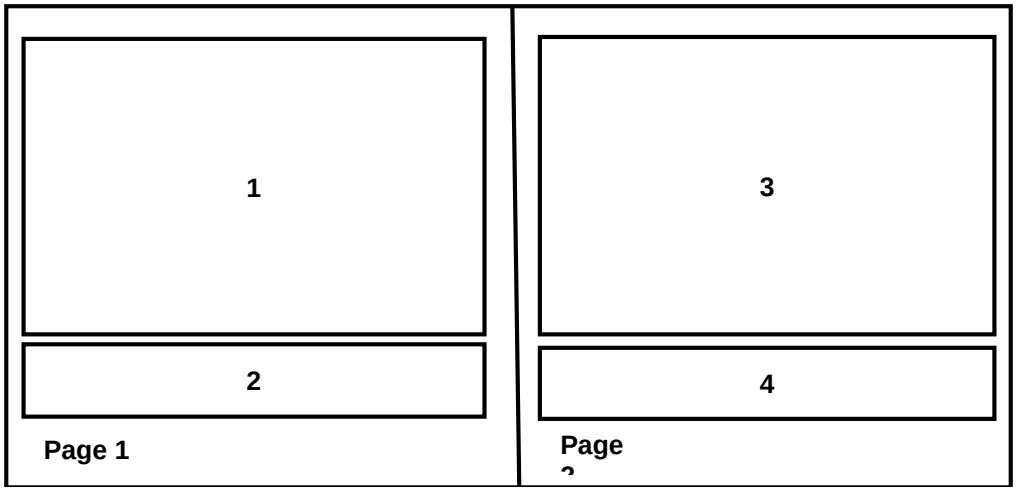


Figure 1: Page layout of the first two pages of the Mail & Guardian health pull-out supplement in March to May 2012.

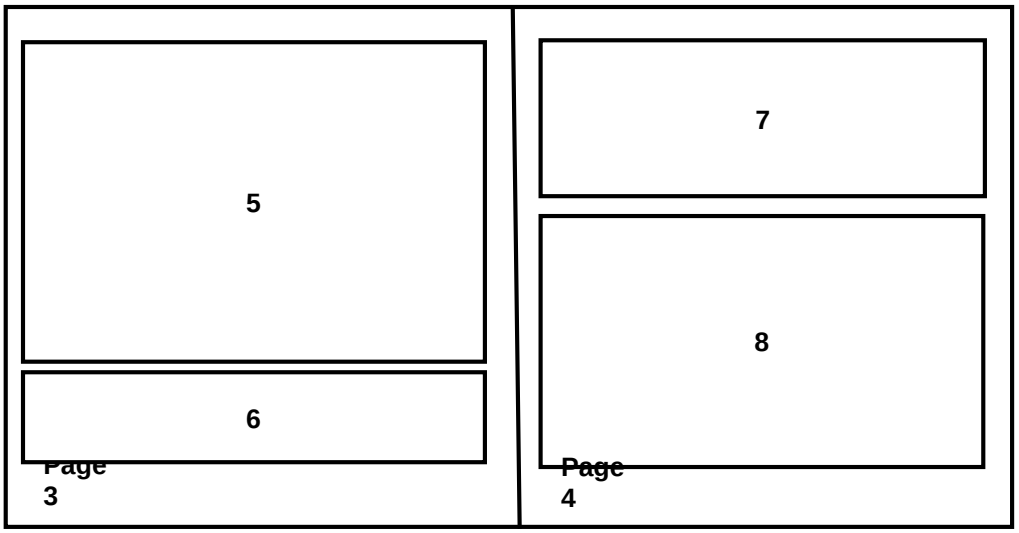


Figure 2: Page layout of the last two pages of the Mail & Guardian health pull-out supplement from March to May 2012.

1: News story

2: Advertisement 1

3: News story

4: Advertisement 2

5: News story

6: Advertisement 3

7: Sponsored feature or advertorial

8: Advertisement 4

The advertisements in the health supplement mostly advertised different Bonitas products – its medical aid scheme options and events that it sponsored(see Images 1, 2 and 3 below).



Health

Supplement to the Mail & Guardian April 20 to 26 2012

Special needs an unrelenting fight

A mother describes the extremely difficult path her family walks daily

Even though he's finally been placed at school the Winter realise there is still a long road ahead for them and Francois. Photo: David Harrison

Image 1: The first page of the Mail & Guardian health supplement during the Bonitas Period.


Health

An unrelenting fight for a special-needs

High healthcare costs: the remedy.

Here's the remedy for escalating healthcare costs, Bonitas' GP Network. And there are many benefits for you to enjoy. Especially when it comes to seeing specialists. For instance, children under two can be taken to a paediatrician directly without a specialist referral authorisation. If the same be expectant mamas and their visits to a gynaecologist. And if you need to see a specialist in an emergency, no problem, just get your GP to create a specialist referral authorisation number, and everything will be sorted out in the way we always like to do things for our members: painlessly.

bonitas medical fund

GP Network

Image 2: The second page of the Mail & Guardian health supplement during the Bonitas Period.


Health

child

Experience our fast, efficient service.

bonitas medical fund

GP Network

Image 3: The third page of the Mail & Guardian health supplement during the Bonitas Period.

Bonitas was the only advertiser in the health supplement during this sample period. There was no correlation in the news content and the adverts that appeared, except on the fourth page which was an advertorial. The sponsored feature or advertorial (7) would be very short and cover a certain topic that would be featured on the *Bonitas House Call* television show that aired on Saturday mornings on SABC 2. The short advertorial and the advertisement were linked. For example, as shown in Image 4, if the advertorial was about bacterial infections after surgery, the advertisement on page 4 would also be about post-surgery infection. The advertisement would also clearly stipulate that the health television programme would be discussing said topic.


Health

Sponsored feature

Hospitals a breeding ground for bacteria

AFTER SURGERY, DON'T GET STITCHED UP WITH INFECTIONS

30 years

bonitas medical fund

Image 4: The fourth page of the Mail & Guardian health supplement during the Bonitas Period. Page 4 was always a sponsored feature about a selected health issue.

Although the supplement was paid for by an advertiser, the agreement with the newspaper was that it had editorial independence over the content produced on three of the four pages, as long as it was health news. At the time, some of the stories covered in the health pages were syndicated stories from *The Guardian* newspaper in London (see Image 5). On other occasions, freelancers were commissioned to write South African-based stories. At the time, Bhekisisa's editor was on retainer with the *Mail & Guardian* to produce stories for the health supplement.


Health

Supplement to the Mail & Guardian March 2 to 8 2012

Sleeping pills linked to early death

Chronic insomniacs are far better off treating their condition through cognitive behaviour therapy than with pills, new research suggests

Those who had taken the most pills were also 35% more likely to be diagnosed with cancer

Image 5: An article from the Mail & Guardian health supplement in March 2012 carrying a story from The Guardian.

Traditionally, the content for supplements is prepared by the commercial department and not the editorial team, however the copy in the health supplement was prepared by the editorial team at the *Mail & Guardian.* Nic Dawes, editor at that time, said the budget allocated to sourcing health stories was limited, therefore the paper used syndicated copy to ensure that the four pages paid for by Bonitas were filled with health news copy. The content in the supplement was not driven by editorial need, but by the need to keep

the Bonitas account. On some occasions, Malan would be commissioned to produce in-depth health stories or comment pieces from various health experts. These stories would often be in the first two pages of the supplement.

> **ND:** We [the editorial team] chose the material and it was sort of like having an anchor tenant in the shopping mall. They [Bonitas] paid for the advertising, but in order for that to work our costs had to be very low, and that meant mainly syndicated content. Besides the weekly supplement, there was little to no health stories inside the *Mail & Guardian* news pages.

In the selected sample in 2012, there were only three health stories in the news pages section. This suggests that health news was relatively low on the paper's news agenda even though the public health system (used by the majority of citizens) continued to face challenges in South Africa (Barron and Padarath 2017, 4). Even if the opportunity arose to create health content that was free from editorial influence by the medical aid, *Mail & Guardian* did not invest in more high-quality health reporting.

4.1.2 GIZ Period: *Mail & Guardian* health pages with one

GIZ started funding Bhekisisa in January 2013, allowing *Mail & Guardian* to appoint a health editor and two health reporters.

The page layout, shown in Figures 1 and 2 above remained the same even after the launch of Bhekisisa because the contract with Bonitas was yet to end, as Malan explains in the extract below.

> **(MM):** [When Bhekisisa started] there was still a bit of Bonitas money left. Bonitas still advertised on the pages so I think that's why it was four pages, because that's what Bonitas had paid for. Then eventually it became three and then two.

The supplement format and Bonitas advertisements continued until the first week of May 2013. But instead of syndicated copy, the supplement was filled with health stories that were produced by the Bhekisisa team, which at the time was made up of two junior health reporters and a health editor. The supplement continued to be a pull-out until the

contract with Bonitas ended. Once the contract was concluded, the health pages became part of the main body of the newspaper. The GIZ partnership allowed editorial decision-makers to prioritise health content as part of the main body, instead of supplementary content.

4.1.3 GIZ and Gates Period: *Mail & Guardian* health pages with two donors

The Gates Foundation started funding Bhekisisa in September 2015, which led to the expansion of its content into the continent and appointment of an Africa editor to Bhekisisa. At this point, Bhekisisa was fully integrated into the main body of the newspaper. In January 2016, Bhekisisa also appointed a health news editor and a senior multimedia reporter to ensure there was an increase in the health content at the *Mail & Guardian.* Two pages were designated for health stories, as shown in Figure 3; this is also the current page layout for health stories. These pages are free of advertisements unless prior arrangements are made with the health editor.

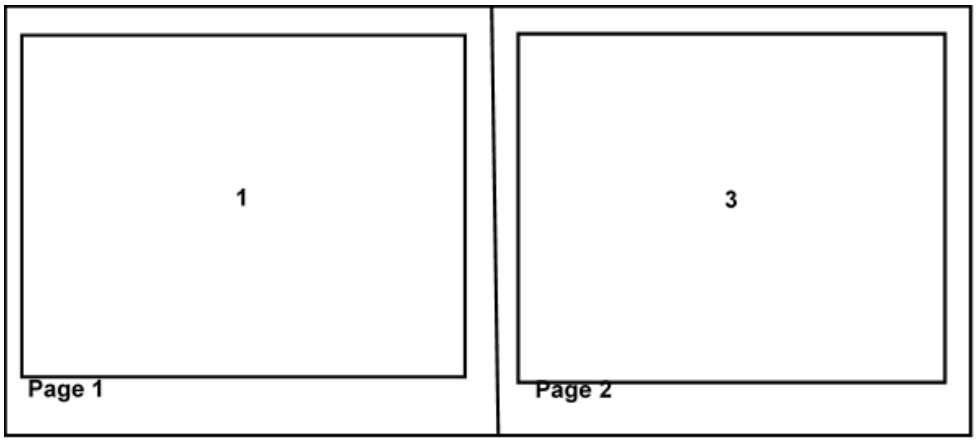


Figure 3: Page layout of the two pages of the Mail & Guardian health pages after the contract with Bonitas ended in May 2013.

4.2 An overview of the *Mail & Guardian* Online

The *Mail & Guardian* was the first online newspaper in Africa. It was founded in 1994 for readers who lived outside of South Africa (see Chapter 1). The health news content produced (through commissioning journalists like Malan) and news wire copy during the Bonitas period were published online under the search engine optimisation (SEO) tag 'health'. It could also be found under the 'M&G Health' tab on the *Mail & Guardian* website.

In March 2016, Bhekisisa launched its own separate website which continued to be a *Mail & Guardian* news product, meaning when one clicks on the health tab (shown in Image 1) on *mg.co.za* it will go to the Bhekisisa home page. The health stories can be found on the sixth spot of the stories displayed in the *Mail & Guardian* home page (Image 2). Clicking on either of the health stories redirects to the Bhekisisa home page (Image 3). Readers can directly go to *bhekisisa.org* if all they are interested in is health news.

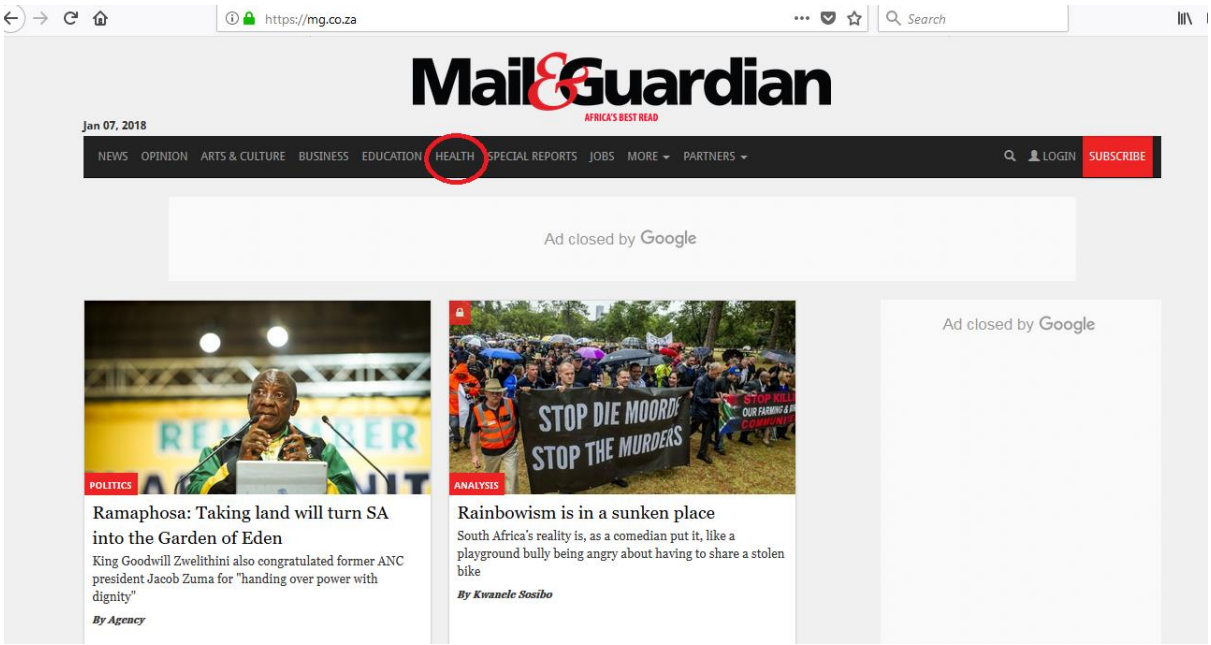


Image 6: Screenshot of the health section tab on the Mail & Guardian's home page.

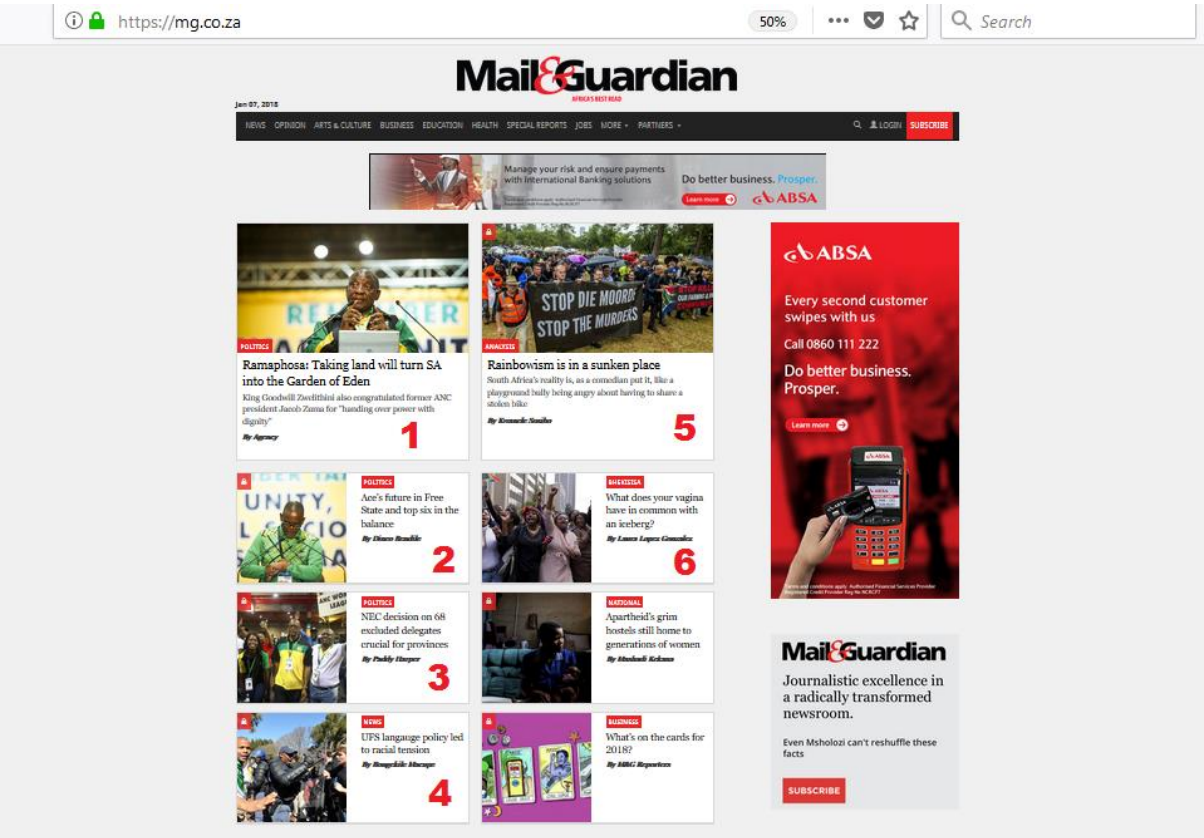


Image 7: Screenshot of the health section's position on the Mail & Guardian's home page.



Image 8: Screenshot health section's home page. Bhekisisa's standalone website was launched in March 2016. Readers can access health news on mg.co.za by clicking on 'health' or can directly visit bhekisisa.org.

4.3 Content Analysis

The content analysis will be analysed in three different phases: The Bonitas Period of March to May 2012, the GIZ period of March to May 2013 and the GIZ and Gates period of March to May 2016. The study is interested in whether or how often the content covered by Bhekisisa correlated with the interests of its donors, GIZ and Gates Foundation. A total of 119 print articles and 131 online articles were coded. The articles that appeared in the print version of the paper were not included in the coding of the online articles to ensure there was no duplication. The results are as follows:

4.3.1 Content Analysis of health coverage in the *Mail & Guardian* health pages (Print)

4.3.1.1 Bonitas Period: *Mail & Guardian* health pages before any donor funding

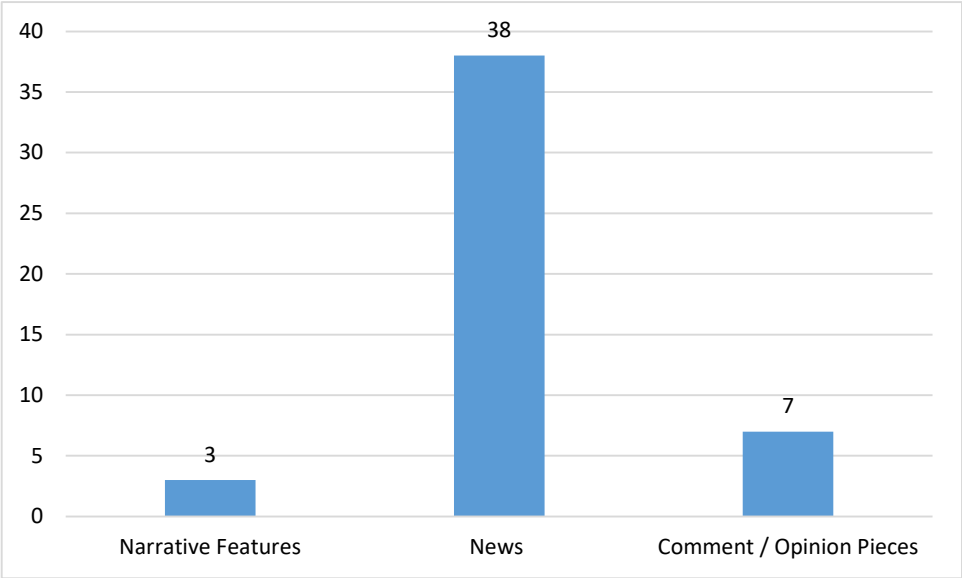
The Bonitas Period represents the sample when *Mail & Guardian* health coverage came as a four-page supplement that was paid for by Bonitas medical aid scheme. A total of 48 health articles were published during the sample period.

Type of articles

Three of the articles were narrative features, 38 were news articles and seven were comment pieces (see Graph 1).

Only one of the articles sampled appeared in the news pages section of the *Mail & Guardian* on page 6, while the rest (47) appeared in the pull-out health supplement. The place where an article appears in the newspaper reflects what is considered to be more important in terms of news values. McQuail (2005, 547) states that the selection of a news article and how prominently it is placed is directly related to the news value placed on the article by the media organisation:

"News media have to decide what 'events' to admit through the 'gates' of the media on grounds of their 'newsworthiness' and other criteria' ... The placement of an article is not only indicative of the value ascribed to it by the news media, but also influences its perceived importance by the audience."



Graph 1: The type of articles that appeared in the Mail & Guardian before donor funding.

Following McQuail's premise, the absence of health coverage in the main body of the newspaper, except for the one article on page 6, shows *Mail & Guardian* did not deem health news as important as politics, corruption or education, which was the majority of the content in the first 15 pages of the newspaper. The health article on Page 6 is negligible – it only forms 0.02% (one out of 47 articles) of the sample.

Furthermore, Nic Dawes – the editor at the time – said Bonitas did not prescribe what kind of health content the supplement could carry. This meant that the health coverage of the supplement was an editorial decision which was not influenced by the advertiser. He explained during our interview:

> **ND:** That supplement was essentially possible because it was essentially an initiative where the advertiser said: "We want to see health material, we want our advertising to be associated with health material, you have independence ... editorial independence to produce that material and we'll pay enough money to make sure there are four pages each time". So, we chose the material …

This reveals that the conditions of the Bonitas funding were broad and only defined by the criterion that the articles in the supplements must cover health issues, but the editors did not have a choice of where the content could be placed. In the absence of the supplement, there was very little coverage of health in the *Mail & Guardian* – which also shows that health news was not prioritised during this period.

Geographical locations of the stories

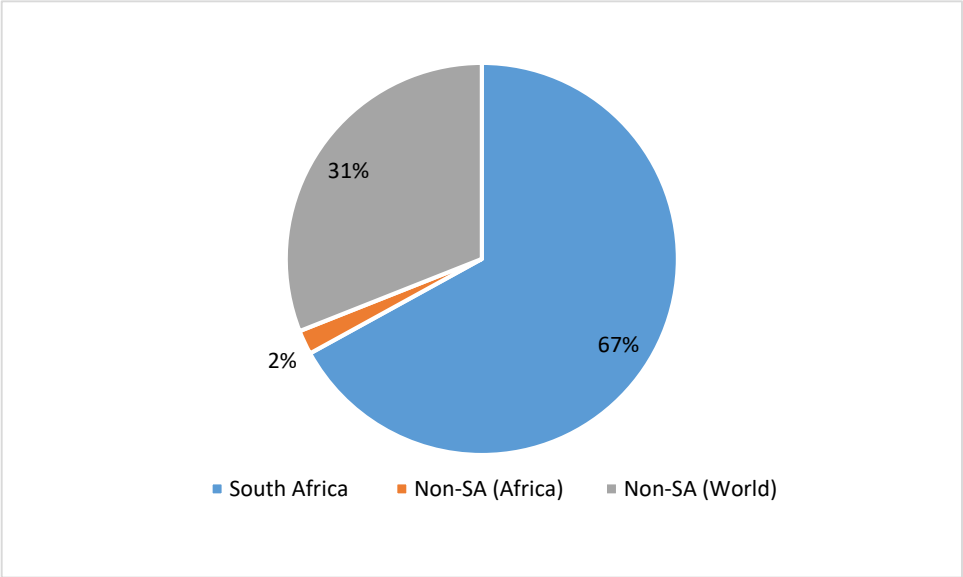


Figure 4: The geographical areas of articles during the Bonitas Period.

Most articles (67%) featured issues related to South Africa while the remaining 31% and 2% covered health stories regarding international issues (Non-SA World) and African issues (Non-SA Africa) respectively.

Most of the articles in the Non-SA World section were syndication copy from *The Guardian.* According to Dawes, *Mail & Guardian* did not have the finances to invest in a fully-staffed health desk, so sourcing syndicated copy was more time- and cost- effective.

> **ND**: I was really under pressure to cut posts and to save editorial costs. We were coming out of the 2008 financial crisis which really affected South African media pretty badly from an advertising perspective and there were job cuts across the board.

Furthermore, there were no designated health reporters at the *Mail & Guardian* during this period. At the time, Malan was not a full-time employee, but she was on retainer to produce narrative features and analysis for the supplement.

> **ND:** [The] weekly health supplement was more of a wellness focus product. It wasn't very serious health journalism; it had its value, but it wasn't really consonant with the brand of journalism that the *Mail & Guardian* is best known for.

Although only 31% of the articles were international, an average of about 40% of the articles were sourced from news wire services, like *The Guardian* for international news and the South African Press Association (SAPA) for local or regional news.

Sponsored features, advertorials and advertisements

All four pages in the health supplement had an advertisement at the bottom of each page (the figure is not included because it would just show a solid pie chart). All the advertisements were for Bonitas, since they were paying for the supplement to be included. The last page of the supplement (see Image 4) was labelled "Sponsored Feature". It carried a the largest of all the advertisements and a short write-up on a health issue that was to be be discussed on *Bonitas House Call.* Some of the health issues the advertorials and show discussed were mental health issues, HIV and family planning. About a third of the articles in the health supplements were advertorials.

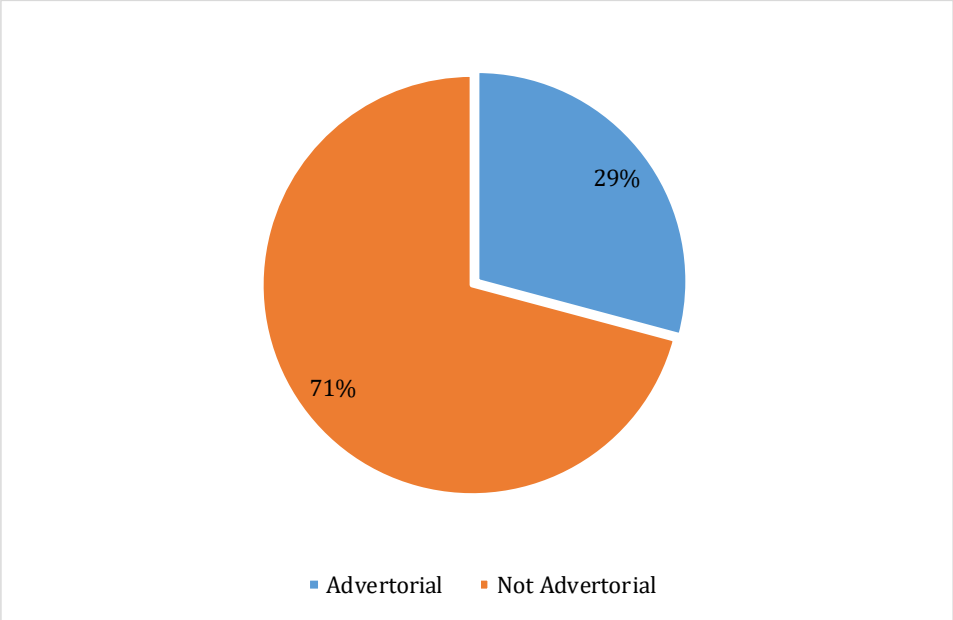


Figure 5: The frequency of advertorial in the Mail & Guardian health supplement during the Bonitas Period.

Health issues and themes covered

Most articles (73%) reported on general issues and themes, labelled "Other". The articles in this sub-category reported on issues like the National Health Insurance Act, different kinds of cancers and non-communicable diseases. The second-highest themes and issues reported during the Bonitas Period were TB, followed by 8% reporting on HIV/AIDS, 6% on malaria and 2% on vaccines.

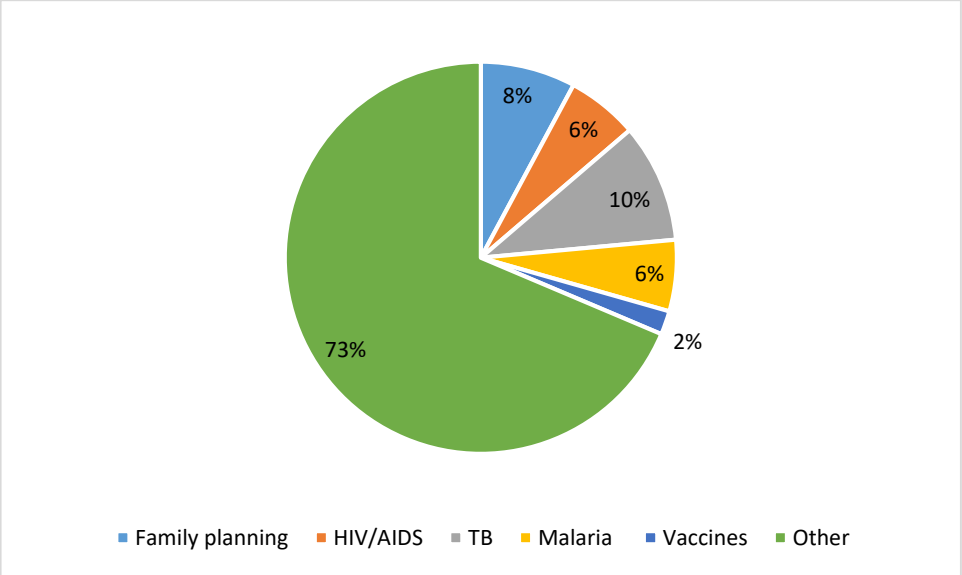


Figure 6: The health issues and themes that were covered in the Mail & Guardian health section between March to May 2012.

4.3.1.2 GIZ Period: *Mail & Guardian* health pages with one donor

The GIZ Period represents the sample when *Mail & Guardian* health coverage was donor-funded through the public-private partnership with GIZ which started when Bhekisisa launched in January 2013. A total of 45 health articles appeared during the sample period, which is three fewer articles than during the Bonitas period.

Type of articles

Five of the articles were narrative features, 32 were news articles and eight were comment pieces. The number of narrative articles almost doubled from the Bonitas

period. However, the number of news articles and opinion pieces remained relatively unchanged.

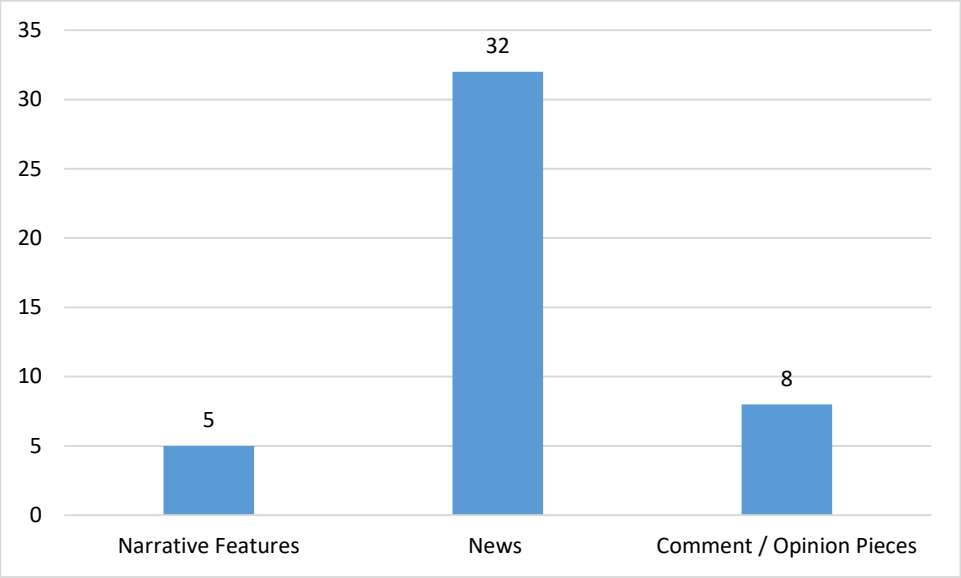


Figure 7: The type of articles that appeared in the Mail & Guardian during the GIZ Period.

The health coverage continued as a four-page health supplement because the contract with Bonitas only lapsed in May 2013. The increase of narrative feature articles was a result of establishment of a health desk at *Mail & Guardian.* It consisted of a full-time health editor and two junior reporters who began reporting on a regular basis. The appointment of three designated health reporters resulted in a decrease in *The Guardian* and other news wire copy.

Geographical locations of the stories

Most articles (89%) featured issues related to South Africa while the remaining 9% and 2% covered health stories regarding international issues (Non-SA World) and African issues (Non-SA Africa) respectively. There was a 29% increase in South African articles and a 22% decrease in international (Non-SA World) articles. The frequency of articles covering the African continent remained the same at 2%. Most of the articles in the Non-SA World section were syndication copy from *The Guardian.*

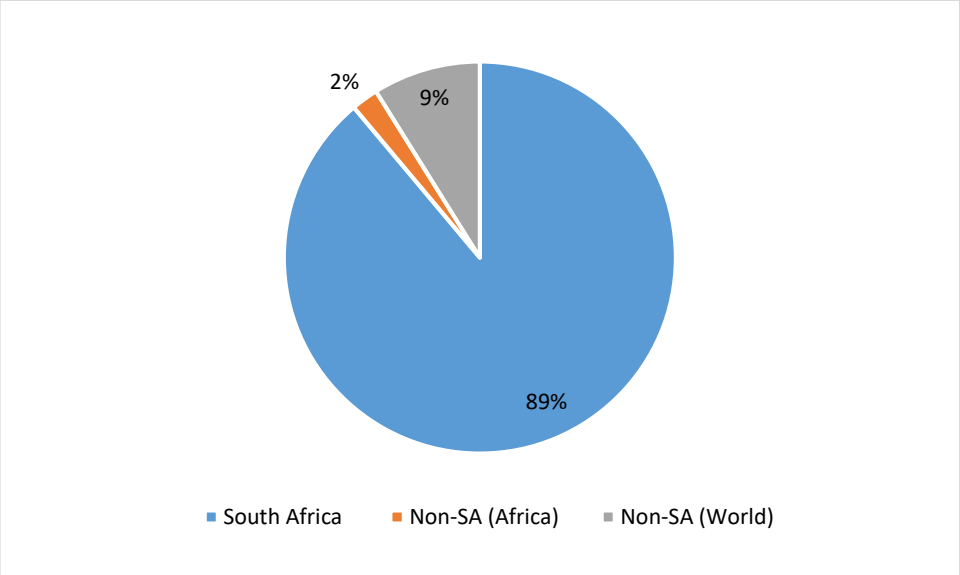


Figure 8: The geographical areas of articles during the GIZ period covered.

Sponsored features, advertorials and advertisements

All four pages in the health supplement had a Bonitas advertisement at the bottom of each page, since the agreement between *Mail & Guardian's* commercial department and Bonitas lapsed into the launch of Bhekisisa. The last page of the supplement was labelled "Sponsored Feature", it also carried the largest of all the advertisements and a short write-up on a health issue that was to be discussed on *Bonitas House Call.* As per the Bonitas agreement, the pages remained as a pull-out supplement until May 2013. There was no change in the number of advertorials that appeared, but the advertisements on the pages decreased closer to end of the Bonitas agreement. Advertisements decreased by 18% after GIZ started funding Bhekisisa.

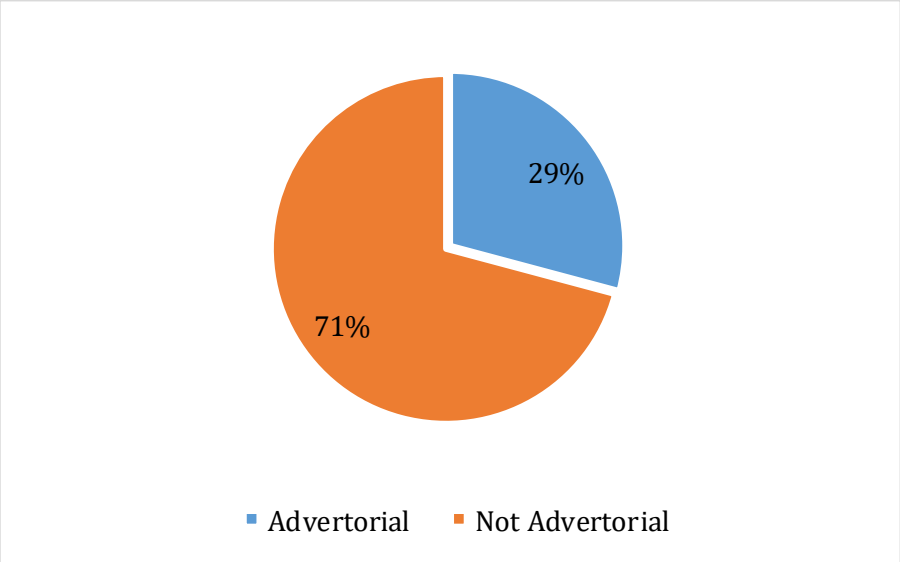


Figure 9: The percentage of advertorials in the Mail & Guardian health during the GIZ Period.

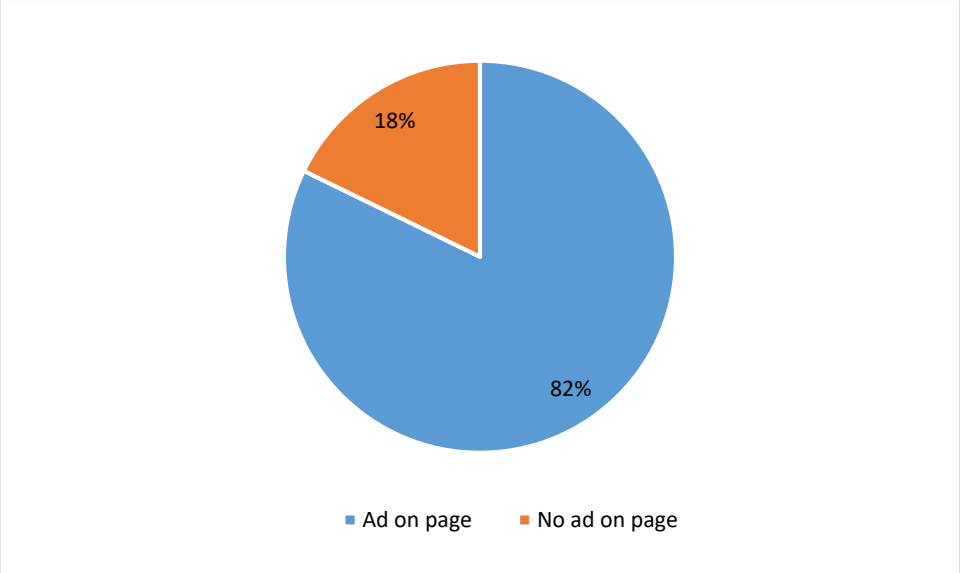


Figure 10: The frequency of advertisements in the Mail & Guardian health during the GIZ Period.

Health issues and themes covered

Most articles (51%) reported on general issues and themes, labelled "Other", a 22% decrease from the Bonitas Period. The articles in this sub-category reported on issues like the National Health Insurance Act, cancer and non-communicable diseases. The second highest themes and issues reported during the GIZ Period are HIV/AIDS at 29%, followed by 16% of articles reporting on TB, 4% on malaria and 2% on vaccines.

As stated in Chapter 1, GIZ's key interests and partnerships in South Africa are (GIZ 2016):

- Governance and administration
- Energy and climate
- HIV and AIDS.

GIZ's interest in HIV prevention is the reason it became Bhekisisa donor through a public-private partnership that began in 2013. The GIZ programme officer for Bhekisisa (GIZPO) showed concern over the lack of HIV/AIDS coverage in the *Mail & Guardian* during the Bonitas Period, which is why he contacted the paper to discuss a way of partnering with it to cover HIV.

> **GIZPO:** I was a regular reader of the *Mail & Guardian* and I was shocked at the lack of HIV coverage in the paper… and the fact that their health pages were sponsored by a medical insurance company.

In the period of March to May 2012, the Bonitas Period, HIV/AIDS-related content in the *Mail & Guardian* was only 6%. It increased by 23% during the GIZ Period.

Bhekisisa is the only news media partnership that GIZ has in South Africa. The programme officer answered as followed when asked why GIZ chose to partner with the *Mail & Guardian*:

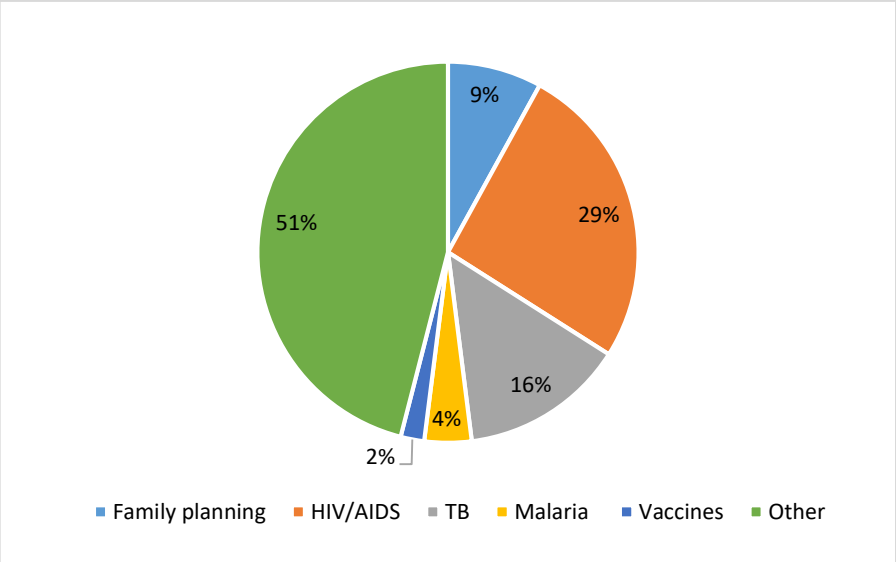


Figure 11: The health issues covered during the Bonitas Period and GIZ Period.

Pontsho Pilane (PP): So the idea of Bhekisisa came from the underreporting or the lack of visibility of health news within the newspaper and in general within South Africa?

GIZPO: Yes, but with the particular focus on HIV. I called Mia Malan and asked her, "What would it take to create a health desk within *Mail & Guardian*, for health-related topics, with a particular focus on HIV and Aids in South Africa, would actually enter the main body of the Mail & Guardian?" That is when she said she would work with the idea with the then-editor, Nic Dawes, and [the] Bhekisisa public-private partnership was created.

Due to GIZ's specific interest in HIV, particularly in the South African government's progress in implementing its national strategic plan for HIV, TB and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), GIZPO emphasises that funding Bhekisisa came with the condition that it would report on HIV/AIDS-related issues.

GIZPO: [I said to Malan and Dawes]: "…The only thing I would like you to focus on is health in general, but in South Africa with a particular focus on HIV and Aids and striking a balance between the clinical aspects of it but also the social aspects and the government structure of who manages the response to HIV and Aids…".

However, the GIZ programme officer made it clear that they didn't want to have an influence on *how* the paper reports on the issue. Dawes and Malan concur with GIZPO's sentiments:

GIZPO: I said [to Malan and Dawes]: "I do not want to write articles and I do not want to read articles for your editor..."

ND: They [GIZ] were particularly interested at the onset in HIV but very broadly .... That was something that they stipulated as part of their objective upfront but they didn't have any input in to the actual content that we produced.

MM: We've been relatively fortunate with programme managers that understand the importance of media independence. In the case of GIZ, GIZPO is an avid media consumer. This helped us a lot because it provided us with an awful lot of freedom

> … Freedom in the sense of, our money comes from an HIV fund but, he had enough insight to realise we can't just report on HIV ....

According to the former GIZPO, the agency does not ordinarily fund organisations for their core work. In the case of its partnership with *Mail & Guardian, the* core work of the news organisation would be reporting. To mitigate this challenge Bhekisisa developed a fellowship programme where it trained community media journalists how to properly report on health issues.

4.3.1.3 GIZ and Gates Period: *Mail & Guardian* health pages with two donor funders

The GIZ and Gates Period represents the sample when *Mail & Guardian* health coverage was funded by GIZ and the Gates Foundation. In September 2015, the Gates Foundation became Bhekisisa's second donor. A total of 26 health articles appeared in the *Mail & Guardian* newspaper during the sample period of March to May 2016.

Before analysing the data according to the content analysis categories, it is important to note the number of articles Bhekisisa was producing decreased from 45 articles during the March to May 2013 sample to 26 during the same period in 2016. This is because by 2016 the health supplement had come to an end and the health pages were no longer a pull-out supplement; health stories appeared in the main body of the newspaper. However, according to Malan the health stories were not prominent in the paper. For example, in the *Mail & Guardian* edition of the week of 17 to 23 May 2013, the health stories appeared on pages 36 to 38 and the following week health stories appeared on pages 40 to 42.

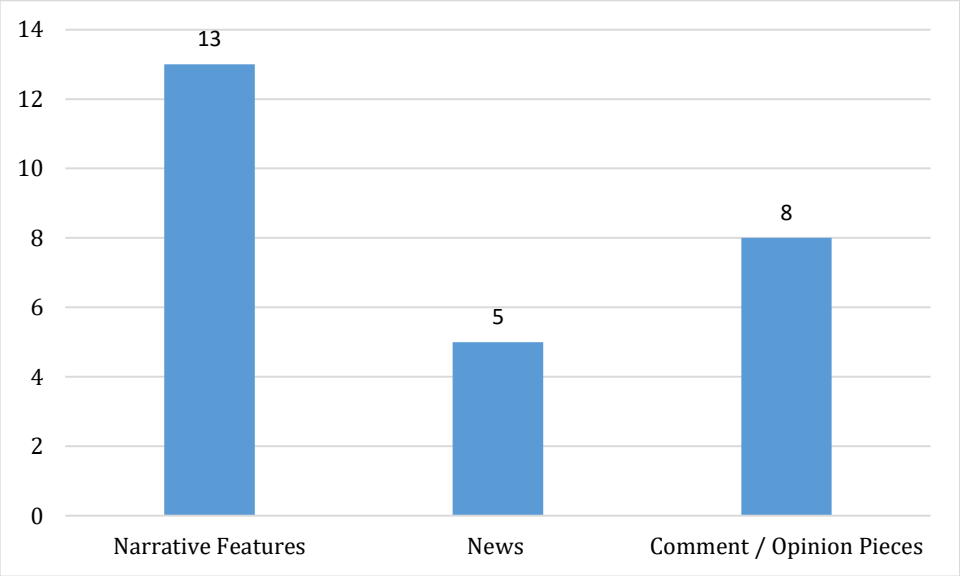
> **MM:** We [health articles produced by Bhekisisa] were in the main body but it was at the back ... just before sports, that's where we were featured [in the main body of the newspaper]. Like comment and analysis was in front of us, everything was in front of us.

The issue of placement in the newspaper ties back to agenda-setting and news values: McQuail (2005) argues where an article appears in the newspaper indicates news value that an outlet perceives it to have. That is, the articles that appear in the beginning on the newspaper (or that are mentioned first in a news bulletin) are considered to be more

important by editors, which also creates its perceived importance by the audience. Therefore, health news was not deemed important enough by the *Mail & Guardian* (albeit not the health desk) as compared to politics and governance-focused articles that dominated the first few pages.

Type of articles

Twelve narrative articles, five news articles and eight opinion pieces appeared during this period. From the numbers, it is clear that narrative articles dominated the health pages, comprising almost half the number of articles in the two preceding periods.



Graph 2: The type of articles that appeared in the Mail & Guardian during the GIZ and Gates period.

Geographical locations of the stories

Most articles (54%) featured issues related to South Africa while the remaining 46% covered health stories dealing with African issues (Non-SA Africa). There were no stories about issues outside the African continent.

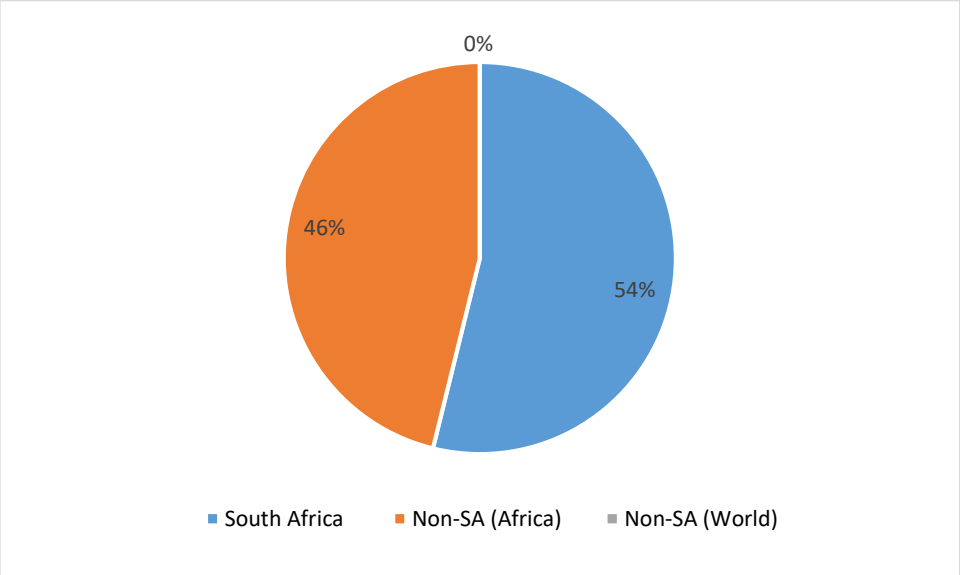


Figure 12: The geographical areas of articles during the GIZ period covered.

In addition to the condition that Bhekisisa focused on solutions-based stories, the Gates grant stipulated that health coverage expand to Africa, which was confirmed by Lopez Gonzalez.

> **LLG:** At the moment we are finishing off a grant that is focused on building a network of solutions-based journalism in Africa. Our focus was not on South Africa but on the continent. That is shifting now and more in the future will become province-focused outside of Gauteng.

To produce more Africa-focused articles, Bhekisisa appointed an Africa editor who worked with various African journalists to write solutions-based stories.

Sponsored features, advertorials and advertisements

Almost a tenth of the health pages carried an advertisement during this period and none of the featured advertisements were from Bonitas because the partnership had come to an end.

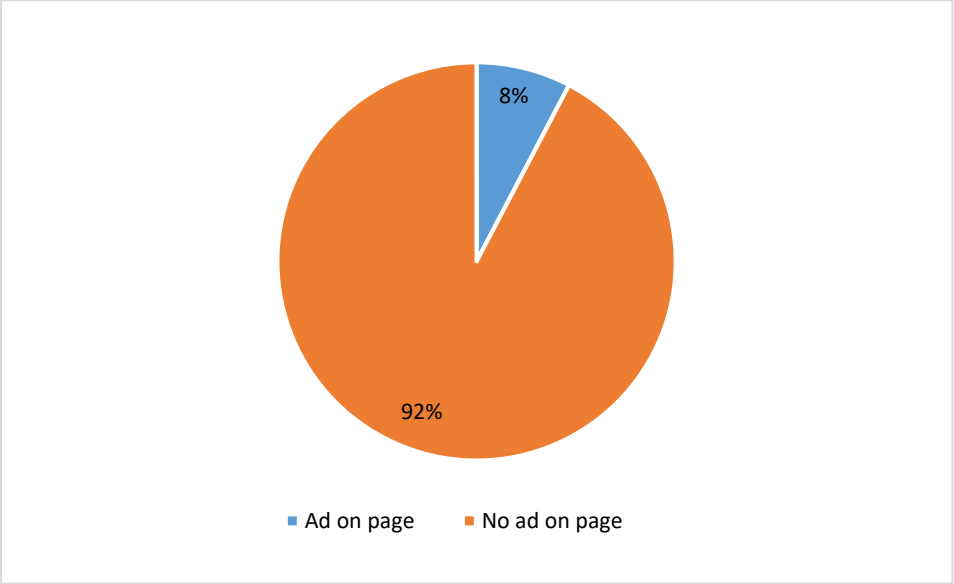


Figure 13: The percentage of advertisements that in the health pages during the GIZ and Gates period.

Malan says advertisements have become a rare occurrence in the health pages because the layout of health section is scheduled for Tuesdays in order to clear the pipeline for news stories that are usually filed later in the week (Wednesdays and Thursdays). The deadline for *Mail & Guardian* printers is 18:00 on Thursdays so that the paper is loaded and dispatched into trucks to be delivered to subscribers and retailers by Friday morning. Furthermore, Malan said being placed earlier in the paper allows Bhekisisa to write long narrative features that will not have to change at the last minute due to an advertisement.

> **MM:** [Pages] 15 and 16 [the usual placement of health stories] is not so common for adverts, so I would rather have the space than page 10 and 11 [because] you never know what adverts are going to be there. [There are usually] big adverts on those pages [which means] we will have to cut our stories a day before it goes into the newspaper.

Health issues and themes covered

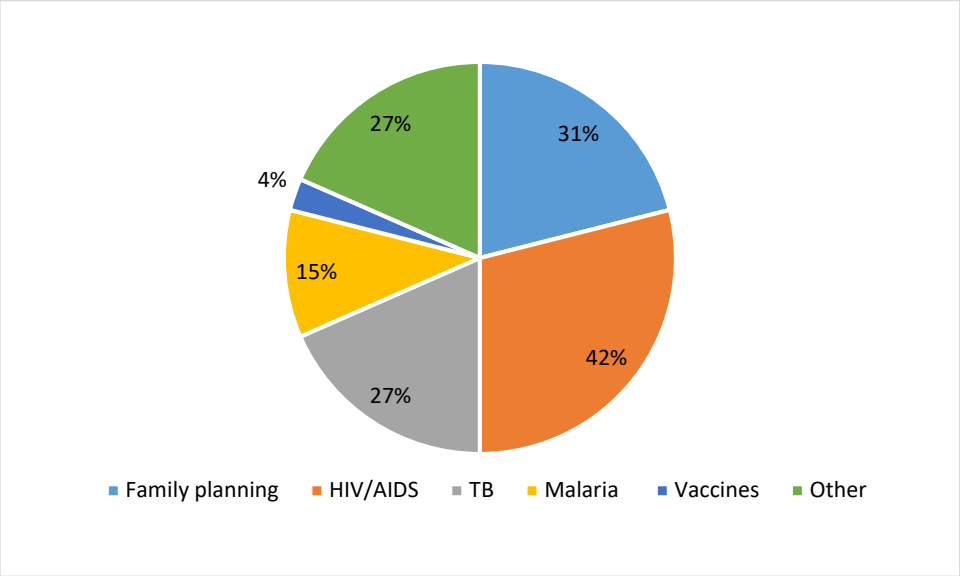


Figure 14: The percentage of health issues that were covered during the GIZ and Gates period.

Most articles in the 2016 sample reported on HIV/AIDS (41%), followed by family planning at 31%, TB and "other" issues at 27%, malaria at 15% and vaccines at 4%.

4.3.2 Content analysis of the online health coverage at *Mail & Guardian*

As noted earlier, the online health content at *Mail & Guardian* is published at *bhekisisa.org*, but still exists as the paper's health news (see Section 4.2). The previous section analysed the content and interviews of the print articles in *Mail & Guardian*. This section will analyse the online articles because there are additional articles that Bhekisisa produced that were not published in the paper. A total of 131 online articles were coded: zero articles in 2012, 29 articles in 2013 and 121 articles in 2016. The results are as follows:

4.3.2.1 Bonitas Period: Online health coverage before any donor funding

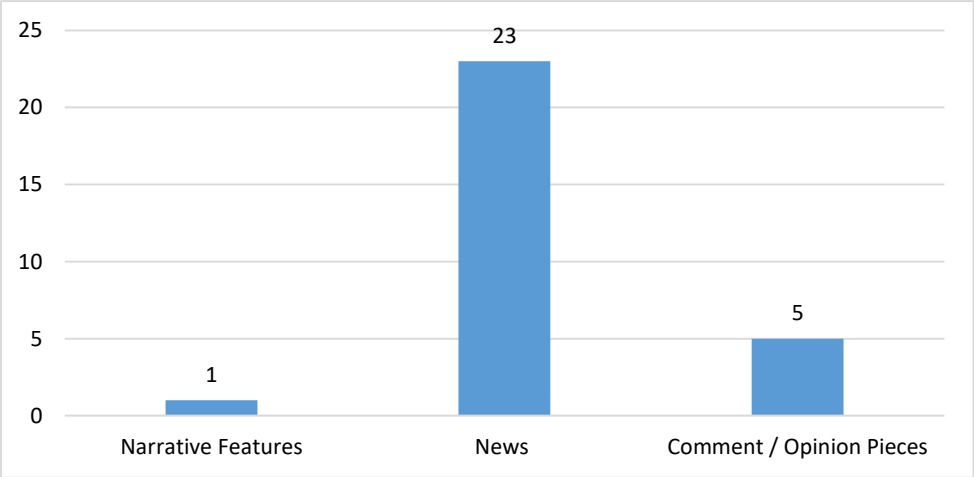
The Bonitas Period represents the sample when *Mail & Guardian* health coverage came in the form of a four-page supplement paid for by Bonitas medical aid scheme. There were no online articles to code in this period because all the articles that appeared in the newspaper were also published online, except for sponsored features and advertorials.

4.3.2.2 GIZ Period: Online health coverage with one donor

The GIZ Period represents the sample when *Mail & Guardian* health coverage was donor-funded through the public-private partnership with GIZ which started when Bhekisisa was launched in January 2013. A total of 29 health articles were published online.

Type of articles

Only one online article was a narrative feature, 23 were news articles and five were comment pieces.



Graph 3: The type of articles that appeared in the Mail & Guardian Online health during the GIZ period.

Four out of five of the online comment pieces were written by experts and only one was written by a journalist. Larsson, et al. (2003) found that health journalists reported the lack of independent researchers as an obstacle in producing high-quality health articles. Bhekisisa regularly commissions and accepts opinion pieces from health experts and activists. It has published a step-by-step guide to writing and submitting an opinion piece to Bhekisisa, with strict criteria (Bhekisisa 2017):

- It describes a good opinion piece as one that "makes a coherent, novel argument with enough background to allow any reader to understand what you are writing about".

- It clearly stipulates that opinion pieces can be written by a person with first-hand experience of an issue, an expert, a policy maker or health worker.

- Because Bhekisisa focuses on solutions-based journalism, it values solutions-based opinion pieces.

- Opinion pieces should only cite published peer-reviewed research from journals or reputable reports from organisations like the World Health Organisation or United Nations and links must be provided for all citations.

This shows that it values high quality content and the focus on solutions is still aligned with its donors' objectives. Dentzer (2009, 361) posits that health reporting can influence the behaviour of clinicians and the general public and public policy. Donors like GIZ and Gates also have a goal of influencing public health policy.

In answering the question whether funders and advertisers are the same, the Gates Foundation Programme Officer referred to the importance of policy at the Foundation, as seen in the interview extract below:

> **GFPO:** We are outcomes investors, which is totally different from an advertiser. Outcome investment is the investment is driven by the desire to see social good. What drives the investment from the Foundation's end is to see an increase in knowledge and awareness around a particular set of health issues, to see an increase in the use of evidence- and data-driven content in the formulation of policies.

When asked about the importance of journalists tracking impact of their stories, GIZPO emphasised how reporting impact is a way to account for funding Bhekisisa. His answer highlights how influencing government officials, who have power to implement policy, is important:

> **GIZPO:** Impact is always very difficult in a newspaper, but it is a requirement for GIZ … I think Mia, whether she would have received donor funding or not, or receive money from the general revenue of *Mail & Guardian*, she would have to report that the minister quoted one of her articles when he was giving a speech in parliament. What more can an editor achieve?

The above extracts show that influencing and keeping public officials accountable is well-liked by donors; this could explain the thoroughness of Bhekisisa's criteria for opinion pieces.

Geographical locations of the stories

The majority of (72%) of online articles relate to issues concerning South Africa while the remaining 24% and 34% covered health stories regarding international issues (Non-SA World) and African issues (Non-SA Africa) respectively.

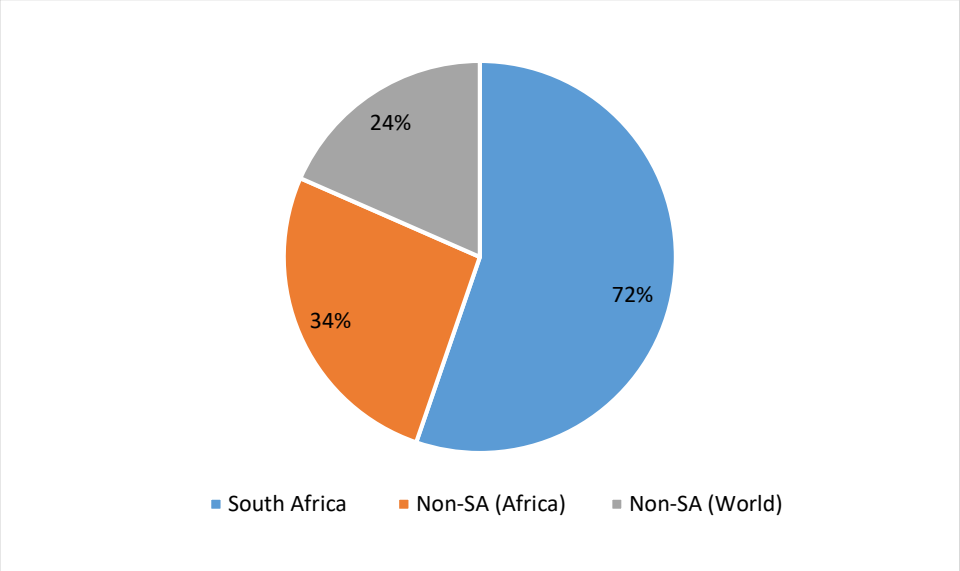


Figure 15: The geographical location of the stories that were published online during the GIZ phase.

The non-African articles are due to the *Mail & Guardian* Online using news wire agencies when big international health crises happened. For example, one of the international

stories is about the Zika virus outbreak, which was syndicated from Reuters. This article was published in 2013, before the establishment of *bhekisisa.org*, it was then marked using the health SEO tag. When Bhekisisa was launched, all the content marked with the health SEO was transferred there.

Health issues and themes covered

Most articles (52%) reported on general health issues and themes, labelled "Other". The articles in this sub-category reported on issues such as the National Health Insurance Act, cancer and non-communicable diseases. The second highest themes and issues reported during the GIZ Period are HIV/AIDS and vaccines, both at 21%. Tuberculosis was featured in 14% of the article and malaria made up only 3% of all articles.

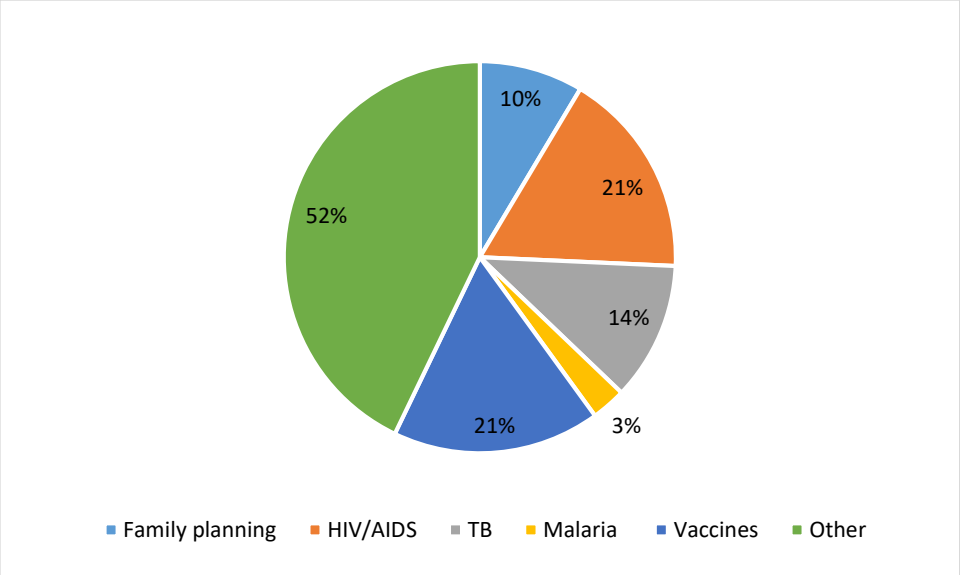


Figure 16: The health issues and themes that were covered online in 2013.

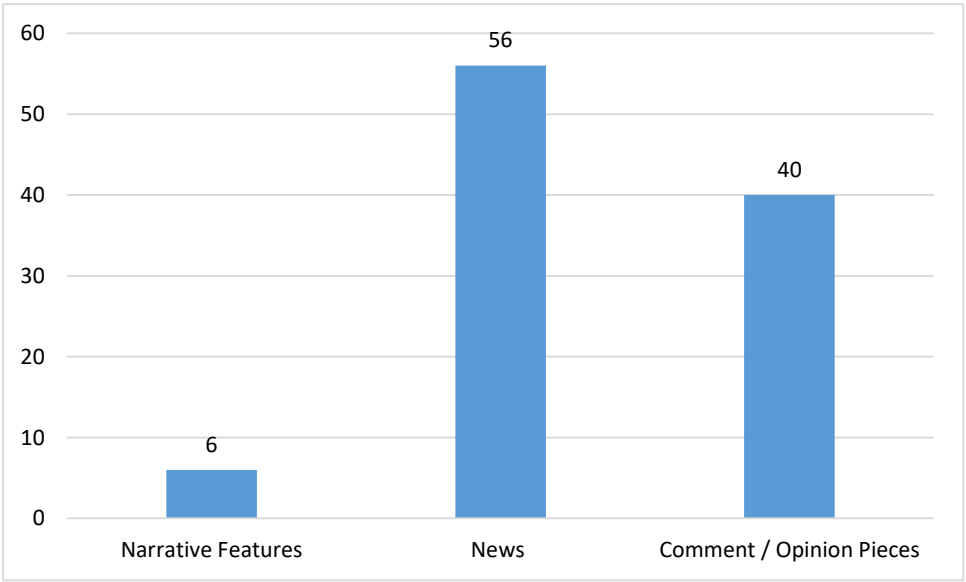
4.3.2.3 GIZ and Gates Period: Online health coverage with two donors

The GIZ and Gates Period represents the sample when *Mail & Guardian* health coverage was funded by GIZ and the Gates Foundation. In September 2015, the Gates Foundation became Bhekisisa's second donor and its website launched in March 2016, the beginning of the sample. A total of 102 online health articles were published during the sample period of March to May 2016.

Before analysing the data according to the content analysis categories, it is important to note the number of articles Bhekisisa was producing substantially increased – more than three times – during this period in comparison to 2013 sample. The number of articles increased from 29 in 2013 to 102 in 2016. During this time, the Bhekisisa staff also doubled – a health news editor, senior multimedia reporter, an Africa editor and a programme associate were hired, which resulted in the increase in content.

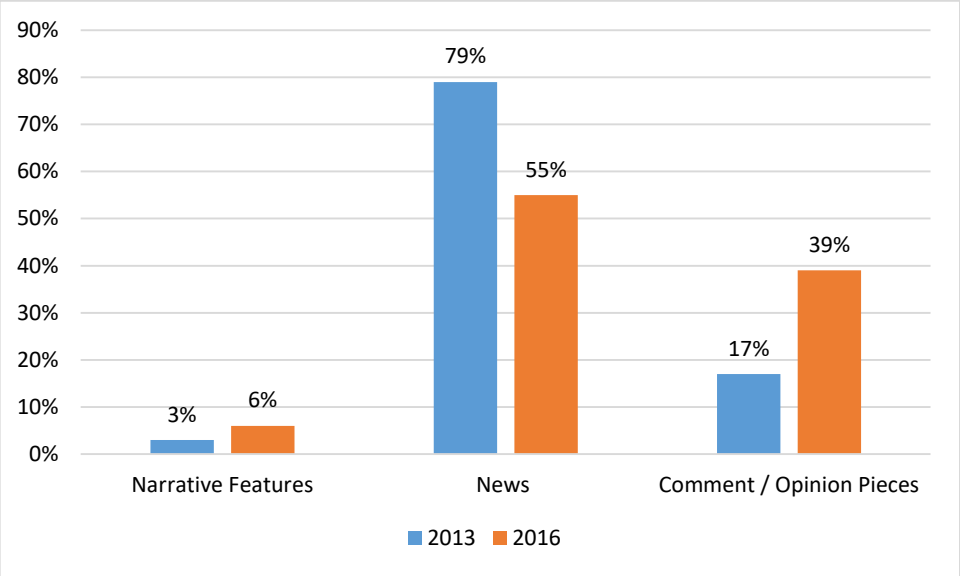
Type of articles

News articles made up almost half of the articles produced during this time, while six narrative features and 40 opinion pieces were produced.



Graph 4: Type of health articles that were published online during GIZ and Gates period.

For the sake of comparing the two periods, I converted the number of articles during the 2013 and 2016 phases into percentages. This shows that narrative features made up 6% of online health stories in 2016 – doubling from 3% in 2013. There was a 24% decrease in news articles, and online comment pieces increased by 22%.



Graph 5: The percentage of the type of online articles that appeared in the Mail & Guardian health section in March to May 2013 and 2016.

Geographical locations of the stories

Most articles in this timeframe (62%) related to African issues (Non-SA Africa). South African coverage decreased from 72% in 2013 to 37% in 2016, while 8% of the online stories covered issues outside the African continent.

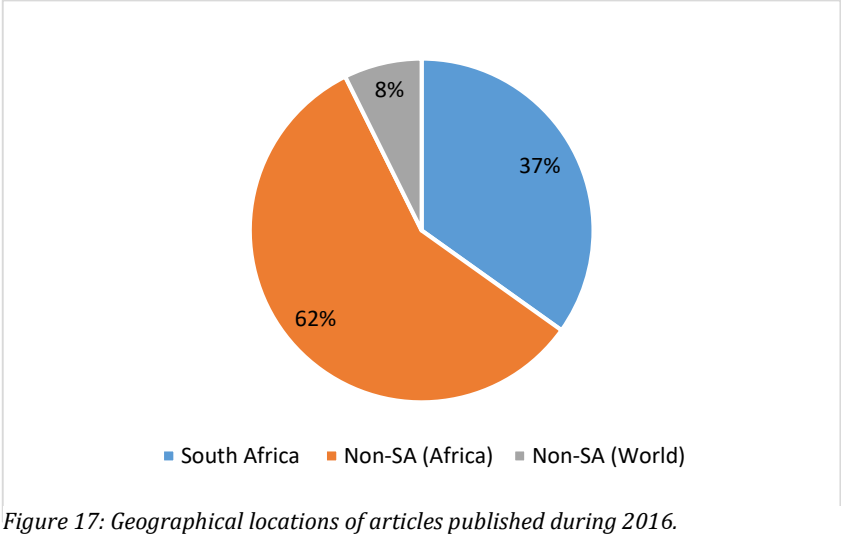


Figure 17: Geographical locations of articles published during 2016.

During this period Bhekisisa was focusing on solutions-based stories as per its agreement with the Gates Foundation. Lopez Gonzalez confirmed this during her interview –the quote below, which was also used in Section 4.3.1.3, confirmed this.

> **LLG:** At the moment we are finishing off a grant that is focused on building a network of solutions-based journalism in Africa. Our focus was not on South Africa but on the continent. That is shifting now and more in the future will become province-focused outside of Gauteng.

Health issues and themes covered

Much like in the 2013 sample, the majority (63%) of articles covered general health issues, while HIV/AIDS accounted for 20% and family planning was covered in 16% of the articles.

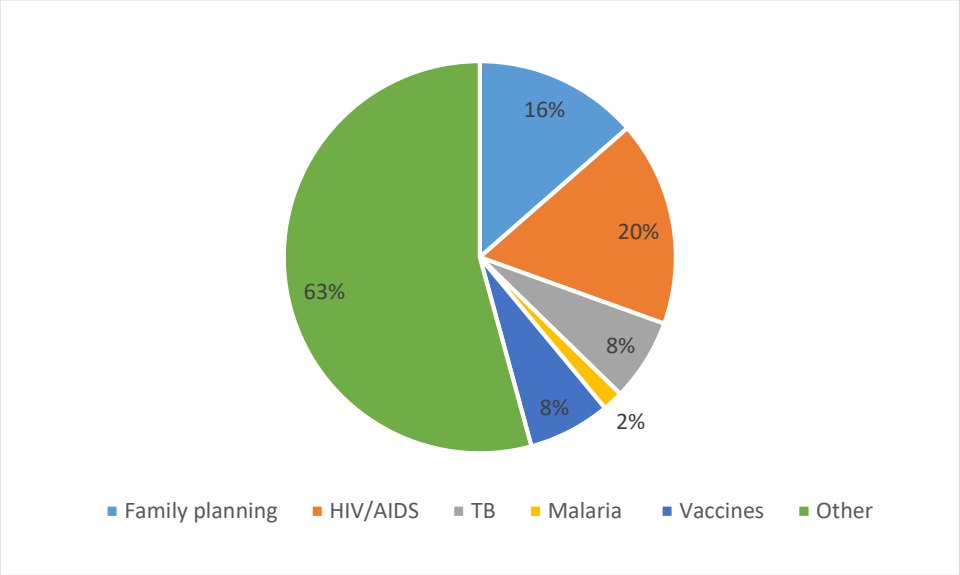
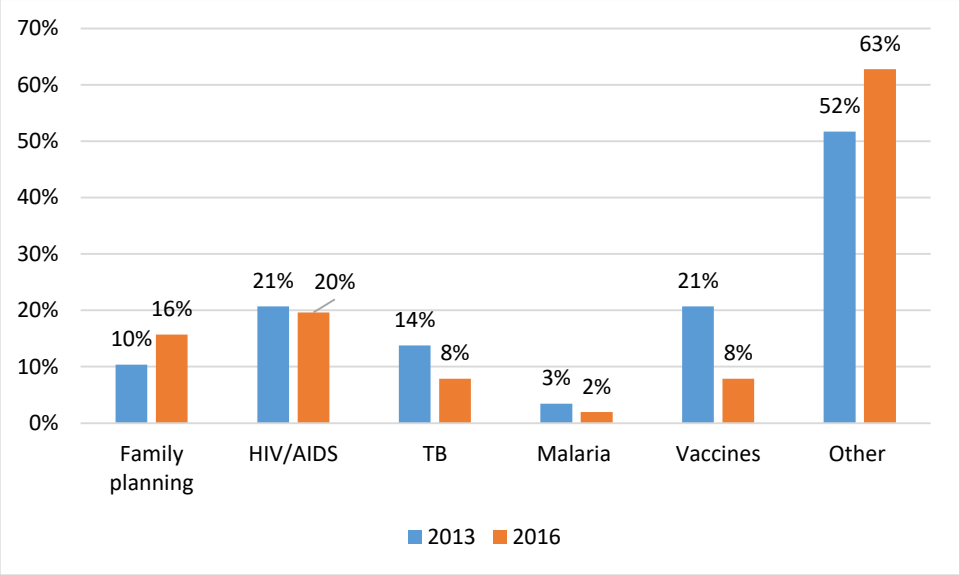


Figure 18: The percentage of health issues covered during the GIZ and Gates Period.

Again, for the sake of comparing the two periods, I converted the number of articles during the 2013 and 2016 phases into percentages. There was a slight decrease in HIV/AIDS-related and malaria stories in 2016, TB articles decreased by 6% and vaccine-related stories by 13%. Family planning reporting increased by 6% while the coverage of other health issues increased by 9%. These trends do not correlate to the trends seen in the print articles for this period.



Graph 6: Health issues covered in online articles between March to May 2013 and 2016.

The data doesn't explain the different trends in online and print articles, however cross-analysing the number of Africa stories with the number of stories that fall under the "other" sub-category shows that 32% of the stories in that sub-category were located in Africa. These stories were mostly about infectious diseases like yellow fever and Ebola – another key area for the Gates Foundation.

4.4 Comparative Overview of Content Analysis

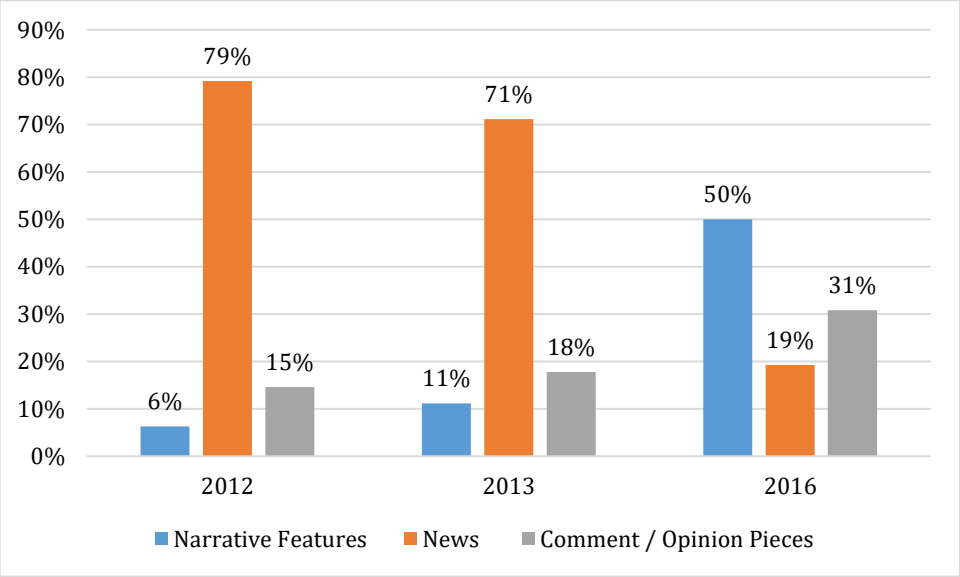
This sub-section shows the data findings of all three phases together. It shows the differences in the periods of funding and the changes that occurred throughout the three-year sample.

4.4.1 Print

Type of articles

During the Bonitas phase there was only 6% of narrative feature articles. There was a slight increase of 5% for the GIZ period, but there was a large increase in the period that was funded by GIZ and Gates. While narrative features increased, opinion pieces (mostly written by health experts) also increased. However, there was a drastic decrease in news articles: 79% of the articles in the Bonitas period were news, 71% during the GIZ period and then a 52% decrease during the GIZ and Gates Foundation period.

To make observations regarding about the overall change in the type of articles that appear during the three phases, I converted the numbers of each article category into a percentage to have a uniform unit of comparison. There was a 39% increase in narrative features from 2013 to 2016, news articles decreased by 52% and comment pieces increased by 13%.



Graph 7: The changes in the type of articles that appeared in the Mail & Guardian newspaper during all three periods.

The increase in narrative features and decrease in news stories is because of Bhekisisa's focus on reporting high-quality health journalism.

> **PP**: What content does Bhekisisa mostly focus on?
>
> **LLG:** We focus on mostly solutions-based journalism … good health journalism is solutions based.

Curry and Hammonds (2014) define solutions-based journalism as "critical reporting that investigates and explains credible responses to social problems." Solutions-based journalism reports on issues in an in-depth manner that often structures stories as puzzles or mysteries. "They investigate questions like: What models are having success reducing the high school dropout rate and how do they actually work?" (Curry and Hammonds 2014). The authors posit that solutions-based journalism can be both highly informing and engaging.

When asked why Bhekisisa focuses on solutions-based journalism, Lopez Gonzalez said that it is currently receiving funding for such stories.

> **PP**: Are there any key areas that donors expect you to write stories about?
>
> **LLG**: Our current funding does not have that kind of ... Our current funding is for solutions-based narrative stories. That is the requisite that the donors have funded.

In her research investigating the relationship between donors and the media organisation they fund, Schiffrin (2017, 1) notes the money the Gates Foundation gives to Bhekisisa comes with the conditions that it is used for health articles, Bhekisisa would expand its health coverage to other African countries, and the reporters would pursue "solutions-based journalism." She further argues that foundations that fund media outlets to "change the world have views about how journalism can make the world a better place, what the world's problems are and, in some cases, what solutions should be implemented." She further argues that the Gates Foundation's prerequisite that the health coverage in *Mail & Guardian* comes in the form of solutions-based stories was a form of soft pressure by commission: "donors were not only interested to see coverage of a particular subject, but to see the coverage done in a particular way". Bunce (2016)

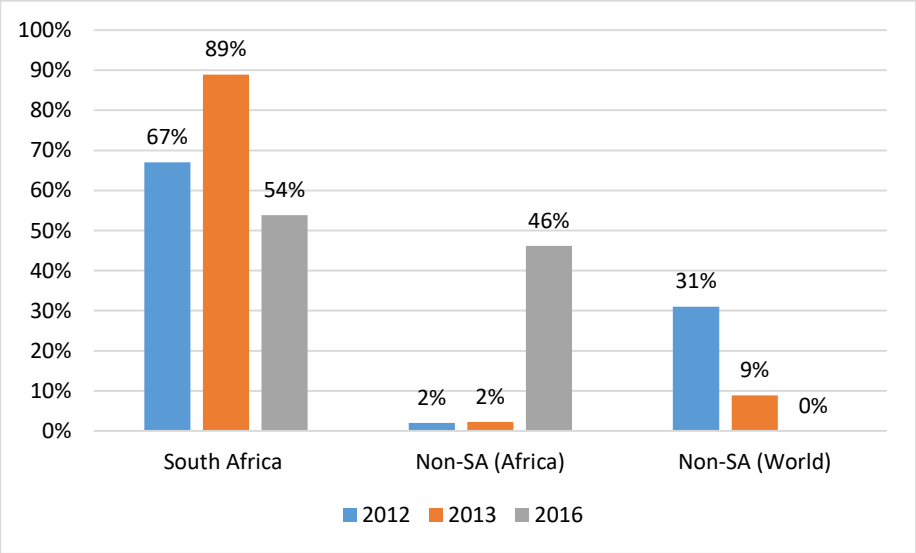
also notes that foundations may fund news organisations to bring change in the world and potentially influence public policy.

Geographical locations of stories

Africa stories in the print edition of the *Mail & Guardian* increased from 2% in the 2012 sample period to 46% in the 2016 during the same period. This was also because Bhekisisa was regularly producing content for the paper's Africa pages as well, as per its agreement with the Gates Foundation. The following extract shows Bhekisisa's health news editor talking about how the newsworthiness of South African health news was decreasing, which led to donors such as Gates Foundation seeking to give grants to news organisations that covered the continent.

> **LLG:** There was a shift a couple of years ago towards funding for constitutional protection and there was also a shift where donors were looking in other regions. So regions have their 'hot' moments and have their 'not hot' moments, I think right now in some donors' minds, South Africa is having a 'not hot' moment as South Africa has got a handle on HIV. This pushes people to do nationally, you're having the same number of organisations trying to go for a more limited pot of funding.

In turn, Bhekisisa appointed an Africa health editor to edit and co-author stories with about 15 freelance journalists from the continent. The use of wire copy also decreased,



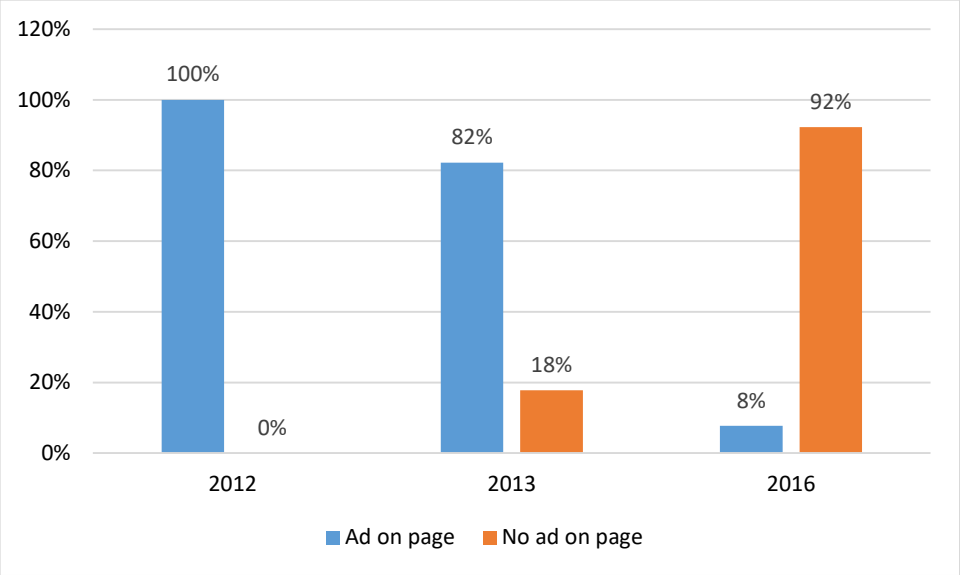
Graph 8: The changes that occurred in terms of the location of the stories during the three funding phases.

which is evident in the decrease in non-African stories in the health pages.

Sponsored features, advertorials and advertisements

During the Bonitas Period there was an advertisement on every page that had an article and a large advertisement was carried on the fourth page of the health supplement that was an advertorial. The Bonitas contract only came to an end in May 2013, during the GIZ Period, which is why there was 82% of advertisements in that phase. There was only one advertisement that appeared during the GIZ and Gates Period; this advertisement was in-house and was not paid for by an advertiser.

The number of advertisements in the health pages decreased by 74%, with only two advertisements appearing the health pages in 2016. One of the advertisements was an in-house advertisement about a *Mail & Guardian* article and the other was an ANC workshop advertisement.



Graph 9: The changes in the frequency of advertisements during 2012, 2013 and 2016.

Health issues and themes covered

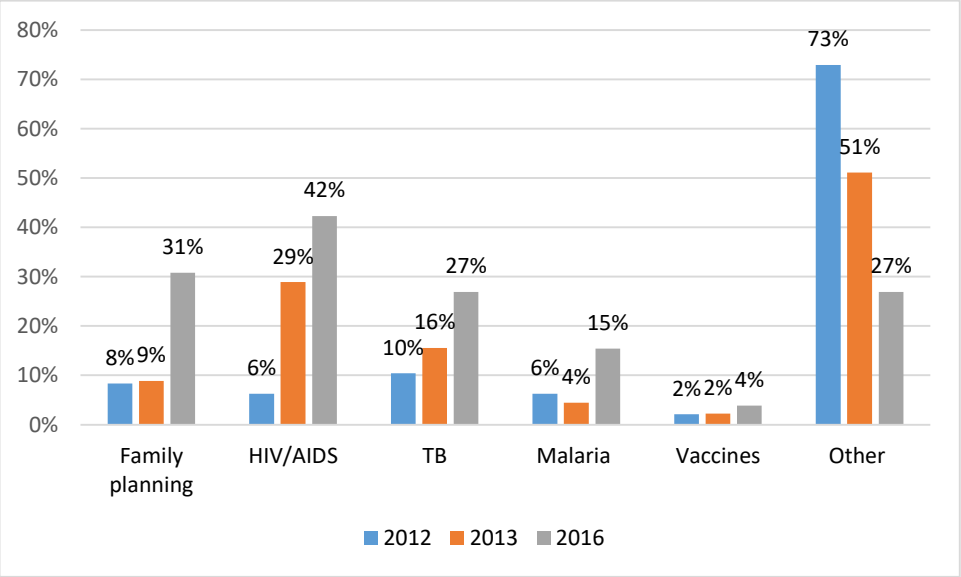
The *Mail & Guardian* covered HIV/AIDS before the partnership with GIZ, but the data samples show clearly that the frequency of HIV stories increased from 6% in 2012 to 29% in 2013. It also continued to increase to about 42% in 2016 after Bhekisisa received the Gates Foundation grant. Reading through the sample articles, it is clear that topics like HIV are covered quite loosely. For example, it sometimes gets a small mention as part of a larger article about a topic such as gender-based violence. The "other" category continued to steadily decrease but continued to be relatively high – especially in 2013 – due to a focus on the National Health Insurance, which was topical in South Africa at the time.

Dawes said that even during the Bonitas Period, the paper tried to cover relevant health news, but still cited lack of resources in the newsroom as a limiting factor in more in-depth reporting. He also noted, that due to the end of the Aids denialism and pandemic, the media was able to focus on other issues beyond HIV. See extract from his interview below.

> **ND:** The whole media landscape was facing pressure on this [health reporting] area and from a kind of coverage perspective there was a lot going on. We had the shift to the new policy on ARVs and the debate over the National Health Insurance (NHI) ramping up that started a few years earlier, but it was starting to get quite crunchy at that time. As the political focus went off HIV it became possible to look at other things again. Newsrooms' capability, not just in the *Mail & Guardian*, but across all South African newsrooms, was shrinking just at a time when it really needed to step up and respond on very complex health issues like NHI and regulations on issues of the lived healthcare experiences of millions of South Africans. I think that we wanted a small way to play a part in remedying that widening gap.

A comparison between the three periods shows a sharp increase in articles that cover family planning from 2012 and 2013 to 2016. The same pattern can be seen when it comes to articles featuring HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria.

However, a close look at articles that fall under the "other" category shows that the number of stories categorised under "other" was so high, especially during the Bonitas Period, due to the use of wire copy that often-covered issues that were abstract and more science-based. As noted in earlier sections, Gates Foundation has a key interest in malaria, TB and family planning - these two themes increased from Bonitas phase to the GIZ and Gates phase.



Graph 5: The changes in the health themes during 2012, 2013 and 2016.

4.4.2 Online

Because all the print articles in the Bonitas Period sample (March to May 2012) appeared online, there is nothing to compare for online health coverage that year. Furthermore, Section 4.3.2.3(the online content analysis for the GIZ and Gates Period) already offers a comparative analysis.

4.5 Editorial Process at Bhekisisa

This section looks at how the health pages for the newspaper and online stories are produced. *Mail & Guardian* has a weekly print edition that comes out on Fridays. The newsroom works on a weekly cycle where production begins on Friday and ends Thursdays once the paper has been sent to the printers. Although *Bhekisisa* is based in this newsroom, it works on a different, two-week, cycle.

The Bhekisisa team usually has diary conference every two weeks – there is no specific date that is designated for this. The diary meeting is led by either Malan or Lopez Gonzalez and begins with announcements before each reporter discusses the stories they're currently busy with. In some cases, stories are even discussed more than two weeks in advance. Malan will have a separate diary meeting with the Africa editor

> **LLG:** We plan in two-week cycles to accommodate the newspaper and then try to do a sketchy pipeline about things that people want to work on or have a long-term vision to do.

Due to this two-week cycle, the health pages are often filed to sub-editors on Mondays and are laid out and finalised by Wednesday in order to free up the sub-editors for a high-pressured Thursday where they are focused on finalising the news pages.

Stories are often discussed according to high priority health issues such as latest development HIV/AIDS research. Moreover, journalists are encouraged to pitch stories that involve the National Strategic Plan (NSP) for HIV, TB and STIs. Health pages were moved from the back of the paper – after the Comment & Analysis section – to before the section, which increases its prominence and news value with the *Mail & Guardian*. Malan says the health pages moved further ahead in October 2015, after the paper experienced financial difficulties that resulted in the media organisation retrenching over 15 editorial staff members (Prinsloo and Speckman 2015). Bhekisisa was not affected by the retrenchments because it was donor-funded, but the rest of the editorial team was under-staffed. The combination of the financial crisis and, according to Malan, an increase in the popularity of the health content moved it closer to the front of the paper.

MM: [The health pages] then got another move to in front of the Africa pages. I think the argument was they liked our stories but part of the argument was [that] we write on Africa as well so it would be a continuation.

4.6 Editorial Influence

According to International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) data[1], the Gates Foundation spent US$165.7-million and US$130-million on sexually transmitted disease control including HIV/AIDS and reproductive health in 2015. This shows that the Foundation invests considerable amounts of its resources on these two areas; in turn, Bhekisisa has increasingly reported on the same issues. The Gates Foundation programme officer (GFPO) explained that one of his duties was to identify potential media grantees which the Foundation can strategically align with to cover health issues.

> **GFPO**: [I] identify potential grantees and then enter into a conversation with them and to find out if they are interested in doing the journalism around health …. So if they are interested, we talk and find out what it is that they want or interested in doing. [This is what] we call strategic alignment.

He emphasised that there are certain health issues the Gates Foundation focuses its philanthropic work on; these inform the kind of media outlets it chooses to fund.

> **GFPO:** The Foundation has chosen specific health issues to focus on and to direct its efforts at. This can be found on the website, but off the top of my head, you are talking about things such as malaria, polio, and the tropical diseases. That is when [we] find out if an outlet would be interested in generating journalism that keeps issues like those on the table so that they do not fall off the table and they are not off the radar.

Miguel Castro, a senior programme officer at the Gates Foundation is quoted (Schiffrin 2017, 13) as saying:

"We only invest in those with whom we share a mission. We get to know organizations that we support well, sometimes in conversations up to a year, and we get them to know us as much as they can as well before we get into funding relationships to make sure that we agree on what the overall purpose of the journalism we are supporting is."

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[1] The International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) is a database where information about development and humanitarian resources can be accessed. (http://iatistandard.org)

The two programme officers' statements show that the Foundation expects its grantees to have an interest in the same issues as it does for the funding to happen. *Mail & Guardian* did not cover these before donor funding, mostly due to a lack of resources and not because the journalists there didn't find these issues interesting. Dawes explained in the same way as the programme officers, saying that it was easy to partner with GIZ because of shared interest in reporting certain health issues.

> **ND:** They [donors] are saying we want coverage of this particular area, and as the editor of the newspaper, I thought that that was it was a very important thing to cover. I was concerned already that we were not covering it. [There] has to be some consonance between the objectives of the funder and the objectives of the news outlet ….

The Foundation is known for substantially funding media initiatives and organisations, with a specific focus on development. A great portion of the Gates Foundation's media funding is targeted at health reporting (Bunce 2016).

As can be seen from the extract from the interview below, the Gates Foundation strongly believes in protecting the editorial independence of its grantees. Malan also believes maintaining the Chinese Wall between Bhekisisa and its donors.

> **PP:** So it is like if there is a top 20, certain issues will be in the top 10 that you would want a media outlet to focus on?
>
> **GFPO**: Want is a strong word … the Foundation are fierce protectors of editorial independence, it is one of those things that we make sure every grantee commits to, irrespective of the fact that they are getting donor money.

4.7 Insider-Status Findings

I became a *Mail & Guardian* reporter in January 2016 as a general news reporter. In August 2016 I moved to the Bhekisisa team as a junior health reporter. It was my first experience working as a journalist for a donor-funded media outlet and there was a lot of adjustment that I needed to get used such as filling in timesheets. At the time I joined Bhekisisa, only two positions were permanent – those of the health reporters. The other positions: editor, health news editor, Africa editor and senior multimedia reporter were contract-based. This was due to grants; the Gates grant required an expansion into Africa which increased the need for more reporters, but this did not guarantee that the grant will be renewed again. The two health reporter positions were permanent to ensure that even if Bhekisisa lost its grants, the *Mail & Guardian* would still have health coverage while it searched for new donors.

As a reporter, I was briefed that HIV/AIDS, family planning, TB and malaria are areas in which I should try to pitch stories. I was also advised to familiarise myself with the National Strategic Plan for HIV, TB and other STIs as GIZ was interested in seeing articles that involve it and "monitors" its implementations. I also had to learn how to do solutions-based reporting, where I not only report on problems but report on the solutions that different people or organisations may be implementing to alleviate the problem. Having to pitch certain stories created a slight sense of self-censorship because I felt the obligation to pitch stories about certain topics. I was never barred from pursuing stories that were out of the donor scope, but I always knew that I had to prioritise certain issues.

Working for a donor news organisation also created other non-media work, such as noting impact, doing administrative duties, helping with payments and social media scheduling. These responsibilities meant that there was less time designated for reporting.

4.8 Implications beyond editorial

As mentioned in the previous section, donor funding has an implication on the normative roles of journalists. That is, journalists are not just there for reporting but also to do the administrative work that comes with working with donors. The following extract from my interview with Malan shows that she had to divide her time between editorial duties (editing stories, reporting and attending editorial meetings) and administrative and donor responsibilities like writing quarterly donor reports and attending events in efforts to create more visibility and impact for Bhekisisa.

> **MM:** Easily 70% of time from admin to ... Or maybe 65%, maybe 70% is an overestimation. Of course, there are some of those things you could argue if you're on a panel it is a bit editorial. You could probably argue that it's not just about ... it's an editorial issue.

Malan said that the most challenging thing about donor-funding is not editorial control, but the "extra" work it creates for the journalists. Other reporters in the *Mail & Guardian* newsroom don't have to do social media shifts to ensure that their stories are read and shared widely. In the *Mail & Guardian* newsroom, there is a designated social media editor who is responsible for this. Below, Malan explains the importance of the social media shifts in the Bhekisisa team.

> **MM:** If we don't have the social media shifts, we cannot increase our readership figures, we can't prove who tweets us and who retweets us and we need to show the donors that important people like policymakers interact with us and our stories. No other reporter does the financial reporting, [ensuring all the receipts for trips and editorial expenses are in order before being sent to the Bhekisisa accountant]. No other reporter has to gather a Twitter analytics report for or information for quarterly reports. I have [junior reporters] on shifts for recording [and filing] our stories so when there is a quarterly report due I can count our articles easily.

Malan touched on various issues that are only found in a donor funder newsroom: measuring impact, doing administrative work, showing donors how and when money is spent. These create more work, however without this work there is a risk of losing donors. Furthermore, due to the limited donors for non-profit media organisations, there is a sense of competitiveness. For example, the original idea for this research was to do a comparative analysis of donor-funded health news organisations - focusing on Bhekisisa and Health-e News Services. This did not pan out as Kerry Cullinan, the editor of Health-e News, denied me access to the organisation, citing that "Bhekisisa has positioned itself as a competitor to Health-e, aggressively pursuing Health-e staff members with job offers and approaching our donors too". Whether or not the allegations by Cullinan are true, the reluctance to allow me, a known "full-time staff member with Bhekisisa" shows the level of competition that can exist within the non-profit media outlet environment. Furthermore, there are only a few organisations that fund health news. This creates a limited pool of potential funders – making it a competitive space for news outlets that are solely reliant on these grants to survive. This also raises the issue of sustainability, which this study was not focused on.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter critically analyses the research findings to answer the research questions and make inferences about the implications that donor funding may have on the health coverage in the *Mail & Guardian* and make general observations about donor funding of media organisations.

The research sought to find out whether the donors of the Bhekisisa Centre for Health Journalism at the *Mail & Guardian* influence the health content produced the non-profit media organisation. To establish this, the research examined how the health unit makes editorial decisions and used content analysis to quantitatively determine any correlation between its print and online health coverage. To do so, several categories were determined for the coding framework. To answer the study's research questions, I triangulated the content analysis of the health pages and online articles against qualitative interviews conducted with key individuals that form and formed an integral part in securing and maintaining relationships with donors and the day-to-day operations of Bhekisisa.

The research found that before receiving donor funding – during the Bonitas Period – the *Mail & Guardian* health pages mostly reported on national health issues: 79% of the articles news stories were based on South African health issues. More than a third of the print articles were syndicated copy – mostly from *The Guardian.*

The absence of health coverage in the main body of the newspaper may indicate that *Mail & Guardian* senior editorial staff did not deem health news as important. Excluding the articles that were commissioned for the health supplement, there was no clear editorial agenda for health reporting at the *Mail & Guardian.* Furthermore, the relatively high use (as compared to the other two phases) of news wire copy shows that there was a lack of commitment towards producing health content. During the interview, the paper's editor at the time, Nic Dawes, said the financial crisis that was happening in the South African media industry at that time reduced *Mail & Guardian* newsroom's health reporting capacity. The commercial agreement with Bonitas allowed the paper to commission an average of two local stories per week for the four-page supplement. An average of two wire agency stories were published. The last page of the health supplement was a sponsored feature that highlighted a health issue that would be discussed on Bonitas'

health television show that aired every Saturday. Content for supplements is often prepared by the commercial team, however in *Mail & Guardian's* case the content was written by actual news journalists. According to Dawes, the supplement was possible because Bonitas (the advertiser) wanted its advertising to be associated with health news. The newspaper was given editorial independence to produce any kind of health news and Bonitas paid for the supplement. This was an opportunity to cover key health issues in South Africa at the time, which the paper often failed to do with the high usage of syndicated copy.

The study also found that there was an increase in narrative features when GIZ started funding Bhekisisa in January 2013. There was also more coverage of HIV/AIDS. According to interviews with the GIZ programme officer, Bhekisisa editor and *Mail & Guardian* editor at the time, the partnership came with the condition to produce HIV/AIDS stories. The increase in HIV stories during this period shows a correlation between the health coverage in *Mail & Guardian* and the strategic objectives of GIZ. The findings show that the health unit was more likely to cover a health issue that its donors were interested than any other health issue – however its health coverage was not only confined to those issues. In interviews with the health news editor, health editor and then-editor-in-chief of *Mail & Guardian*, I found that if funds were available, the editors would still report on the above-mentioned issues, however the study was unable to determine if this would be the case.

Furthermore, there was a decrease in the use of syndicated copy when donor funding became available. This improves the quality of the health journalism that is produced at *Mail & Guardian.* Currently, Bhekisisa employs seven full-time staff members, the highest number of full-time staffers at any section in the paper's editorial team. This allows for the paper to cover more local and national news that readers can relate to.

The Gates Foundation started funding Bhekisisa in September 2015, on condition that it produced more solutions-based narrative features and increased its Africa content. To ensure that it met these targets, Bhekisisa hired an Africa editor, health news editor and senior multimedia reporter to increase its capacity and to focus on Africa. The Africa coverage increased during this period both online and in print; this is what Schiffrin

(2017) calls “soft pressure by commission”. This form of soft pressure can be seen as a form of editorial influence the Gates Foundation has on Bhekisisa.

The research found that both Bhekisisa and the donors do not see their relationships as having any kind of editorial interference, but more as a “strategic alignment” and collaboration between organisations that have similar interests. However, in these cases, the donors hold the economic power, which makes this relationship imbalanced.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This chapter draws together the aims, rationale and research questions with the findings. To do so, this chapter will ensure that all research questions are answered.

The study concludes that although there is an absence of overt control of editorial decisions, there are hidden, often insidious ways, in which donors may influence editorial decisions. Particularly looking at the case study in this research, I conclude that there is a clear impact that donor funds have on the health reporting at the *Mail & Guardian.* Mainly, the research findings show that there is an increase in the type of stories the news organisation covers when it receives donor funds. Donor funds allowed for a specialised health unit to be created – which in turn increased the quality of the health journalism found both online and in the print versions of the paper. This insidious influence is not inherently a threat to media independence, especially considering the financial constraints newsrooms are facing. Designated funding for necessary – but often time-consuming and expensive – niche reporting such as health is vital and donor funds allowed *Mail and Guardian* to delve into this. However, this raises a concern that news organisations that solely depend on donor funding may find themselves aligning to potential donors' objectives as a way to secure grants and self-censorship could take place.

The research also found that donor funding had an influence on *Mail & Guardian's* news agenda and newsworthiness of health news. From the findings, it seems the more Bhekisisa content aligned to its donors' strategic objectives and goals, the more prominence it gained in the newspaper and online. But there are other factors that increased health journalism's prominence in the *Mail & Guardian* – such as the quality of the health stories that were being produced. Bhekisisa's content is nuanced, evidence-based and because the health desk only has two health pages every week journalists can spend adequate time on their reporting, which research shows makes for better health journalism.

Lastly, the research shows that there was editorial interference as Bhekisisa expanded into Africa as a condition of one of the Gates Foundation's grants. Although its donors have not prescribed quotas for what kind of stories the journalists can do, they report

these quotas in a form of written reports to their donors. This, again, shows some level of editorial influence but it is not control. Because the interference is not overt or break any kind of journalistic practices and ethics, the study concludes that the concerns about donor funding that have been raised by previous scholars should be taken seriously by non-profit media organisations and foundations. Efforts to create a code of conduct for donor funding relationships should be made before this type of financing for news organisation becomes more popular.

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Appendix A: Extracts from interview with Bhekisisa founding director and editor Mia Malan

Pontsho: Please tell me who you are and what is your role at Bhekisisa?

Malan: I am Mia Malan and I am the editor and director of Bhekisisa.

Pontsho: How long have you had this role?

Malan: Since January 2013, but I have been involved a little bit longer because I conceptualised the concept and found the money and then started it.

Pontsho: So Bhekisisa launched in 2013?

Malan: Yes, January 2013.

Pontsho: So you talk about donors, what is your interaction with the donors in terms of being the director but also having editorial responsibilities? What does that relationship look like?

Malan: Before I answer that question, let me give you this. The thing is, as a journalist I wouldn't have just known how to interact with donors. It's not like I woke up one day and knew how to do it, it's because I worked for a media development organisation. I would also not have known how to write a proposal if I wasn't based for three years in Washington D.C. writing proposals and I didn't like it. But it's not something you just wake up and know how to do basically. So, because of that, I learnt a bit about the interaction with the donors and donees normally have. Otherwise I would have been completely overwhelmed and I think I would have been in a position where I would just do anything the donor tells me. I wouldn't have known about your rights or how to interact. I think one of the things that really determine your interaction, two things, with the donor is the donor itself and their policies and then the person who manages you.

Pontsho: When was the second wave?

Malan: It's now.

Pontsho: So Gates started funding you, you started with GIZ in 2013?

Malan: So we started with GIZ in 2013 and we got more than one GIZ grant. Then it got renewed, we got a no-cost extension. A no-cost extension is when you have money left and they extend the end date of your grant, but they don't give you more money. You submit a proposal on how you're going to use that money.

Pontsho: Basically finish the budget you already have?

Malan: Yes, and the first time they funded it, it was structured differently from now. They funded us as a public private partnership. The reason they had to do that was because we weren't registered separately so it becomes quite complex that way. It depends which donor it is, Gates don't have a huge issue with it. Every donor has a different policy. GIZ's policy is that they do not fund any organisation for their core business so they could not fund us for reporting unless we do ... because that's our core business ... unless we do a service we do not normally provide and then they can fund salaries for that thing and it does not matter if you also use it then for reporting. So that is why we had fellows initially because they could only fund us if we also do the training and that is why we did the fellows. If it wasn't the fellows we would have had to do some sort of other training thing that is not our core business. But the fortunate part for us was we didn't just want to be just a reporting desk, we wanted to do something more than that. So that happened to fit into what we wanted to do, and I think with Gates, the fortunate thing for us is that the subjects they are interested in, are very much what we are interested in any way**.**

Pontsho: So there is common ground?

Malan: Very common ground. So when you choose a donor, it is very important to choose someone that has interests that you have. For instance, a very inappropriate donor for us would be PEPFAR because first of all, we don't want to be associated with a Trump government. But on top of that, I've worked for a PEPFAR project in Kenya, they will give you quotas as to, not how many HIV stories, but as to how many ARV treatment stories, how many medical male circumcision stories and that becomes editorial control then, in a structured way, start to structure your reporting in a way that is prescribed by someone. Having said that, I think it is the direction that donor-funded journalism is going to move into. There is going to be a very thin line between, you know the lines of independence there are going to blur. Donors love using the word "creative solutions" around it but I see it blurring already. No donor is funding you just because of it ...

Pontsho: ... out of the goodness of their heart.

Malan: They have very specific ways in which they want to change the world and they want you to form part of that thing, which is why you need to see that you find a donor that wants to change the world in a similar way to what you want to change the world. It will never be exactly the same; there will always be a part that frustrates you. But I think it is important to learn that the donor also needs you, so you can also push back. I've learnt

this in the second round of funding. They have a strong interest in you being perceived as independent because otherwise no-one would read your story.

Pontsho: Do you have to back up what the person is going to do?

Malan: You do. You do need to back up and what is very time consuming in the case of Gates budget is that you have to for every single cost that exists within the budget and there will be about 76 or 130 of them, you have to write a paragraph as to why is it that cost, how did you calculate that? So if I say, Pontsho, I need to justify how I calculated your salary and why did I calculate it that way and it's a two-year budget, so you know what our increases are like in South Africa or something even more complex. For instance, I want to buy recorders I can't just make up a price, I have to say which recorder I will buy. So they want to know you have researched it and on which website's prices is it based and it must be a price you can get it at in South Africa. That's quite a time-consuming thing to do with every single cost.

Pontsho: ... Everything that costs. Do you consider, we were talking about the strategic alignment, so you would align with donors with the same interest and objects as you. When you have diary do you think about what you want to do for the year or the week or the month depending on how you plan. Do you consider these objects? For instance, I know you said with PEPFAR it's very specific like social determinants of HIV, do you say we need, not five stories but we need to cover this part because this part is the part that our donor likes.

Malan: So one thing it's like a constant negotiation process. So one thing about wanting to keep a donor and keeping them interested is that you do need to be able to provide them with or your programme officer with ammunition so that when he talks to his supervisor, he has reasons as to why we should get funded. Somehow it does need to tally up with their objects. For instance, it is very researched based; one of Gates' things is that they invest a lot in medical male circumcision because it is one of the cheapest HIV prevention strategies. Now I don't think I will sit here in a meeting and let us do 15 male circumcision stories because I don't think people will read and I don't think there is enough to say about it. Even though I know they will be very impressed with that, you cannot argue against what people are interested in. Unless, I might be more interested in reading up on more interesting angles we can explore but I am certainly not going to sit here and say let's do two subjects on exactly the same thing.

Pontsho: Do your donors give you their strategic objects and then you have them or do you decide on them in meetings?

Malan: I don't know what their strategic objects are yet, to be honest with you, but they are going to give it to me. I'm pretty sure they will, and it is probably on their website to. But our objective for instance and our second proposal they came up with, not me. The reason I was comfortable with it was because it was all about the NSP, they want to see what the NSP has implemented in an accountable way (we would have held the government accountable in any case) *and that almost anything* (*whispers*), it's like it's only one thing, it's on HIV, TB, sexually transmitted infections, that's from teenage pregnancies to...

Pontsho: So already, just through looking at the articles I have now, the copies from the *Mail & Guardian* from 2012 and there is maybe one health story and then there is a health supplement and now in the present you find that it is a standard to have health pages. Having been at the *Mail & Guardian* in different positions and capacity, what are your thoughts on how health coverage has changed?

Malan: It's obviously changed very drastically but it was a planned change. It wasn't like it was coincidentally. When I was here as a fellow, there was a very junior health reporter and I don't think the senior editorial staff felt she was that dedicated. I then started to work with interns, and it was good interns… people who were really, really clever, but then they left.

What else is there going to be? There's no one to do it. Basically unless you gave it to an intern, which you would probably have to supervise quite a bit, and the intern can also not just do health stories they also have this thing they had to go through, this portfolio which is why I was frustrated and started. Because I saw the impact and how much larger the impact is if it is an integral part of the newspaper, it's something they really want to create. So when they started the supplement, it's not like the *Mail & Guardian*, like I do think Nic was committed to health reporting but I don't think he had the resources to actually appoint a proper person. So when I started on the retainer, I mean it was really only because they had the supplement, it's not because someone magically came up or was so desperate for me to write health stories in the paper.

The nice thing about that thing was that you had so much space and no one cared what was in it so you could write as long as you want to. When we came here, when I wrote that proposal it was very specific in the proposal, it was much thought through 'this is

how many pages you need to give us in the newspaper' and it was written in the proposal: GIZ will not give the money directly to the *Mail & Guardian* but it was not at GIZ necessarily. Obviously they wanted that but we came up with as well...

Pontsho: By "we" you mean you and other editors?

Malan: Me, and I think Nic very much supported it but when I say 'we', I mean Nic had to justify it to advertising so it's not him who can ... I'm pretty sure he had the power to say just two pages; that we need to be in the main body of the newspaper. At that stage the only thing I could get through was, we were in the main body but it was at the back just before sports, that's where we were featured. Like comment and analysis was in front of us, everything was in front of us. But what the interesting thing, Pontsho, was you can sometimes use chaos to your advantage. Because there used to be four pages in the supplement, these people, the *Mail & Guardian*'s understanding of donor-funded journalism at the time was zero. They didn't understand what it was. They thought it was like advertising like Bonitas, they didn't really understand, not Nic, they didn't know what the difference between Bonitas and GIZ was. So we had four pages at the time which was too much for us but not because they thought it should be fine, they thought it was because of Bonitas. Because they didn't understand the difference...

Pontsho: We've talked about the editorial stuff; how has donor funding changed how you operate in terms of an everyday thing? You talk about spending a lot of time on donor reports and how does it affect the rest of your team as well?

Malan: That's a very good question because if someone asks me what the biggest challenge of donor-funded journalism is, you would expect me to say editorial control or something. That is not really an issue, it is something at the back of my head but it is not. My issue is that if you have to tell me, write a paper on has donor-funded journalism changed your job? Yes, it unequivocally has. The way it has is in the way I do what my staff does. No other reporter in this newsroom has the responsibility of checking hits. You check it if you're sort of interested, it's not like a job basically, and it's more than a job, you actually feel responsible for it to create the things. No other journalists have social media shifts because if we don't have the social media shifts, we can't increase our readership figures, we can't prove who tweets us and who retweets us and we need to show the policy makers that. No other reporter has to sit with paperwork, like Demelza does the financial report. It's not brain surgery, but it is time consuming. No other reporter has to gather Twitter analytics reports … yes, or information for quarterly

reports. I have Joan and Anele on shifts for recording our stories so when there is a quarterly report I can count the stuff easily and don't need to pull it up.

No other people have a Google form for impact and it sounds like little minor things but it's not. I think it takes up, for you guys, at least 20% of your time and of my time, I think more than half my time. I would like to spend 40% of my time on editing and the other thing is that's not where it ends. So now that is putting pressure on us to diversify our funding which means they want to see other people investing in us and there is actually a goal in our second proposal: we have to find a certain amount of money from other donors by the end of our second year of funding, which means I need to go on these road trips/conference trips like I have been to promote us, to build relationships with people to potentially fund us but also for other people to know about us who donors might bump into. That takes me away from the office and it takes me away from structuring content and it takes me away from... and there are only so many hands. It sounds like a big team, but it isn't a big team for what we are doing.

Pontsho: What do you look for? You just spoke about one of your targets being diversifying funding, what do you look for when you are going to diversify? Is this looking for other donors or looking for other money generating...

Malan: I think a combination. So any donor wants you to see, they always talk about the word 'self-sustainable', now I don't think any donor-funded media organisation in the world, not just in Africa, can become self-sustainable entirely, that's the point of donor-funded journalism. Maybe in 30 years from now there is some mechanism that has come up that you can use it for but at the moment that's why there has been, there was never so much space for donor-funded journalism. The reason a space has been created is because of the whole lack of funding. Some measure of self-sustainability, absolutely because that is also good for you as an organisation because it means it makes you less dependent on people like that and it gives you money that you don't have to report back on, unless it is to a board. Something for Bhekisisa that we have started to do to generate money and to create a small endowment fund, that you can live off the interest obviously it is going to take five years to turn into that, is we're charging for training. So if someone is asked to, like Laura is going to Botswana to do HIV training, we are charging for it and Bhekisisa gets all the money for it. We are going to do abortion trainings next year but they are paying for it, we have made it clear that we are not going to do any logistics. So that money is really for our labour and we can put it in a savings account where, like

invest or leave it in a savings account and get more activities like that so we can eventually create money off it or the Critical Thinking Forums money and put it into a thing like that. Another way of looking is that yes, you need to get other people, other donors to seem to be interested in what you do as well. Now when donors say diversify, it is a very difficult concept for me at the moment because one the one hand they mean let someone else take over 30% of your funding; on the other hand they mean let someone tag on, do more things. If someone wants to tag on, I find it very hard to understand how I am to tell someone what they are tagging onto because if I don't know what happens after two years, you have seen even with GIZ who was clearly interested from the start, it took about a year and a half to get the funding so if you start talking to someone now it's not like you get the funding in six months, it takes until till that process is finalised, easily two years. Or Gates it took me three years to get them to the point where they gave us money. How do you tell someone to tag onto something in 2019 when you don't know what Gates will invest in you? Will those resources that are needed to tag onto, you know to have a basic project and maybe you give us an investigative journalist or something; will that work? But obviously there is some formula because that is what some people do.

Pontsho: and you are creating the formula as you go?

Malan: Yes.

Pontsho: Do you think it is safer, as someone who has had experience with donors, to have a lot of donors or to have one donor? What do you think works better, editorially and in terms of finances?

Malan: Editorially I would prefer to have one big donor and I only report back to one donor. That is obviously, for me, my ideal but it is not the donor world's ideal and I cannot pretend that I operate in some vacuum because I don't want to have to do so many quarterly reports, it's double the work. If you have four donors, it's four times the work and you need to write four new proposals and then it's a lot of work to align all of them to each other. Once you get to the reissuing of all them, but that's not how they operate. They want to see two things: they want to see ... they want to be patted on the back to say their investment was a good one, that's why other people are also coming in and they want to see that they can eventually ... that they have created a long-term thing. A long-term thing to them is not something they invest in for 10 years, it is something that has other baskets to draw from as well and from a sustainability perspective people will always say you shouldn't actually – I can't remember what the figure is – but you

shouldn't have more than 40% of your funding from a single donor. This is because it makes you less able to survive because if a donor pulls out at least you still have 60% to survive and you can cut down on something but you can survive. If you have all your funding from a donor then it's over when they go.

Appendix B: Extracts from interview with Bhekisisa health news editor Laura Lopez Gonzalez

Pontsho: Please state your name and your position at Bhekisisa.

Lopez Gonzalez: My name is Laura Lopez Gonzalez. I am a news editor at Bhekisisa. I joined in July 2016.

Pontsho: Today is the 3rd of October 2017. What is your role at Bhekisisa? What do you do? What does your day to day look like?

Lopez Gonzalez: I am the news editor. I am in charge of the day-to-day running of the unit. This means I assign stories, I edit the news stories and analysis, I coordinate with production, answer reader queries. This is the main day-to-day stuff. I oversee and make sure stuff is happening on the website, social media shifts, like day-to-day admin really.

Pontsho: **in your duties, you have not mentioned anything about the donors. Do you have a direct relationship with the donors? Do you work with the donors?**

Lopez Gonzalez: No. So I have done donor-funded journalism for most of my career. As with most of the places I have worked at, the donor relationship is really with the director of the centre. So the extent that which I deal with these donors, I would sometimes deal with the donors as clients to the Critical Thinking Forum. This is the bulk of it. I have been on a couple of calls where Mia and I have just asked questions in terms of upcoming proposals. So in that way, I deal with the donors minimally, very seldom, it is mostly about hammering out proposals.

Pontsho: **So you would say in a month, how many times do you deal with the donors?**

Lopez Gonzalez: I would say about, I think about three times a year.

Pontsho: **So three times a year, does this include the Critical Thinking Forums?**

Lopez Gonzalez: Yes, I would say around three times a year including Critical Thinking Forums.

Pontsho: **Besides, you mentioned that only Mia deals with the donors and with most of the projects you have been in, are there other people in your team that deal with the donors in some way or another?**

Lopez Gonzalez: No, I would say that the people on the donor-funded team are responsible for collecting data for the donors. I do not think that ... the person collecting

the data is not directly filing it to the donor. So in my experience, the director is the intermediary.

Pontsho: **Let's talk about the content that is produced at Bhekisisa. What does diary look like at Bhekisisa?**

Lopez Gonzalez: is this "do you consider ..."? So we have diary probably every two to three weeks. This is because we tend to work on longer things. So it consists of the reporters, myself as a news editor and our director, when she is available. We give brief updates on what we are working on, sometimes speak about some issues we see coming up, and we speak about what is coming up for the next two weeks. So we play in two-week cycles to accommodate the newspaper and then try to do a sketchy pipeline about things that people want to work on or have a long term vision to do.

Pontsho: **what content does Bhekisisa mostly focus on?**

Lopez Gonzalez: So we focus on mostly solutions-based journalism, which I think in health journalism ... well good health journalism is solutions based. But we are trying to take it a little bit further. So yes, there is a strong public health benefit to it. Sometimes we do ... try to think of creative ways to do that. Sometimes we also do consumer reporting and that is less than the public health reporting that we do. For example, we might do something like compare medical aids.

Pontsho: In terms of areas of public health, which one do you mostly focus on?

Lopez Gonzalez: In South Africa because of the sheer burden, you can never get away from HIV and TB. So we do a lot of that, we have done a lot of gender, we do mental health. It is pretty open in that way.

Pontsho: **Are there any key areas that donors expect you to write stories about?**

Lopez Gonzalez: Our current funding does not have that kind of ... our current funding is for solutions-based narrative stories. That is the requisite that the donors have funded.

Pontsho: **In terms of... do donors have a say in the kind of stories that are produced, because Mia has to submit reports to the donors and she ranks the stories according to the topics done?**

Lopez Gonzalez: As far as I know, no. So in the past when I worked at places, especially as donor funding became challenging, we started perusing bigger grants. These grants did have quotas saying you need to produce x number of cancer stories a month. This was difficult as it did skew coverage. At Bhekisisa we have been fortunate that we have not had any quotas like that.

Pontsho: **So you can do any kind of health story?**

Lopez Gonzalez: Yes. Again, we have also got funding for narrative solutions-based journalism. The GIZ funding, from my understanding, the work is for HIV stories.

Pontsho: **Mia will give more clarity on that. Is there anywhere where you see ... have your donors sometimes approached you suggesting stories that you should do?**

Lopez Gonzalez: I have only spoken to the donors about three times, they have not, no.

Pontsho: **in your experiences, not revealing Bhekisisa's proposal, what do you think about when you are thinking about things that should go into a proposal for a donor? So if you have donor a, b, c, what is the thinking process behind drafting three different proposals for three different donors? What do you look out for in the donor, first of all?**

Lopez Gonzalez: What do I look out for in a donor or what do I look out for in proposal writing?

Pontsho: **Firstly, how do you choose a donor? How does Bhekisisa choose a donor? How does Bhekisisa choose or decide that they want to pursue a specific funding?**

Lopez Gonzalez: part of that for Bhekisisa is figuring out if you have enough money, if the grant is big enough to justify the admin, I think that everyone has this concern. I have not looked for donors with Bhekisisa, but I can speak from my history with non-profits. You have to look for a donor with similar values as you and that funds similar projects. If you were to map who funds what in South Africa, you would find that there is a lot of people who share the same kind of funders. I think also, especially from a health background, you're looking at what could be the competing interests. So especially at the height of ... costs have come substantially down since the beginning when South Africa really started to deal with the epidemic. However, it would be inappropriate to take money for example if you were a health reporting organisation and an Airbnb company wanted to give you money. As those prices had fallen so much, where we had gotten the massive gains, some people were like 'okay cool'. So maybe those are okay donors now but maybe some sectors like the cancer sector, in terms of pharmaceutical price is really happening, would be inappropriate. So that is the role that boards play, is to help you navigate the ... competing interests. Pharmaceutical companies, there are red flags there, mining companies...

Pontsho: Is that why donor-funded things, some but not all, are mostly foundations?

Lopez Gonzalez: I think foundations are a better bet than organisations.

Pontsho: **Does this have to do with independence? Do you think that there is less,I do not want to say editorial control, but...**

Lopez Gonzalez: I think that is it to do with independence. I think whether or not, for example, if Anglo gave you money they would try to sit in on your diary meeting. However, I think that the perception ... what I have learned from the non-profit world in general and not just necessarily just donor-funded journalism, is that people's perception of where you get your money counts in their perception of you. I think that there is also ethical issues about whether or not you wanting to be taking money from an industry that is seen to be profiting off of people's lives.

Pontsho: One of the biggest problems that has been critiqued by many academics in South African media landscape, is that news coverage and not necessarily health, but news coverage in general is very urban centred. Is there a concerted effort to leave the urban Gauteng and go to more rural areas by Bhekisisa?

Lopez Gonzalez: Yes, I think you will see this probably more in the future grant. At the moment we are finishing off a grant that is focused on building a network of solutions-based journalism in Africa. Our focus was not on South Africa but on the continent. That is shifting now and more in the future will become province-focused outside of Gauteng.

Pontsho: And the coverage that is already, in the year that you have been here, do you think that it has been more Gauteng centred?

Lopez Gonzalez: The grant was for Africa so...

Pontsho: I mean in an African context

Laura: Yes I definitely think so. I think that we have had a year of unstable staffing. This is also interesting to note is that once you take three years to get in with a donor and they give you the money and expect you to be able to report on. Especially in the beginning, the foundation phases of the project to show the outcome in the year whereas is really ... for you to show outcome in a year, from when your money landed in the year, you have to hire a bunch of people, you have to go through lessons to learn with a bunch of people. So I think that our coverage was very Gauteng focused as we settled, and as we settled as an organisation.

Pontsho: How does donor funding effect the generic main stream roles of ... 1. Have you worked for a mainstream news organisation?

Lopez Gonzalez: As a freelancer.

Pontsho: Do you think that there are differences in the roles of a donor-funded news person as compared to when you not?

Lopez Gonzalez: Yes.

Pontsho: What are those differences?

Lopez Gonzalez: I think that you have to do a lot more, I think donor-funded projects, well the ones I have worked on have been a lot smaller, so there was very little room to be a dedicated reporter. So if you thought that you were going to come in ... like when I was at a mainstream newspaper, I came in, I reported my story, I checked my story, I left. This means, are they on track with documenting impact, collecting social media metrics, handling the financials for an upcoming report, filing papers. Then they have to do that on top of it. I have to monitor that on top of just regular news production and editing. Then I am working on proposal stuff and things and other stories outside of time.

Pontsho: ... Organising critical forums…

Lopez Gonzalez: Yes. There is just less people to do the same stuff and we are working on being sustainable. We are organising Critical Thinking Forums on proposals. Often people, reporters are asked to get things in preparation for proposals.

Appendix C: Extracts of Skype interview with former editor-in-chief of *Mail & Guardian* Nic Dawes

Pontsho: What was your involvement in the conceptualisation of Bhekisisa?

Dawes: I had been talking to Mia you know, on and off when she was doing work for other organisations for some time about concerns that we both had about what was happening in health reporting. There had been the period where South African health reporting was very dominated by the political fight over HIV and Aids and a lot of editors started to believe that there was "reader fatigue" about the HIV and Aids debate. The irony was that even as we still had, of cause a serious epidemic but also other, you know, major concerns in the health sector that people actually started to decrease their investment in health reporting. Even at a paper like the *Mail & Guardian*, which had a long commitment to health reporting at the time when I took over as editor, it had been somewhat the deemphasised and we were under pressure to save costs and to keep only the hardest edged and essential reporting posts going.

So we were talking about that and she had, I thought, some really good ideas that she had learnt from her work at the intersection of non-profit work and health reporting, from all of the training she had been doing with people, from her discussions in both the donor sector and with governments, and among other media experts about what was possible. So you know I think that Bhekisisa is an idea that Mia really developed, but that I helped her to bring to life I guess you can say, you know I believed in the idea very strongly, and I wanted to give it a home at the *Mail and Guardian*. So I worked with her and with the initial funders GIZ, the German donor agency to get it off the ground. So I was very involved in all of that, both the conceptual discussion and the initial fundraising and giving it a home for the *Mail & Guardian*. I must say, I think that the intellectual conceptual core of it was Mia's work. I just help to give it life.

Pontsho: How long were you editor at the *Mail and Guardian* from which year till when?

Dawes: From 2009 till the end of 2013, nearly five years.

Pontsho: Nearly five years and you know you were saying that by the time you came on board as the editor there was a bit of disinterest in health reporting. What was happening at that point, besides the reader fatigue? What was happening within the media landscape where health was not being prioritised?

Dawes: Well I think everyone was under constant pressure at the time that I took over. I mean we subsequently went into a real building mode but at the time I took over, I was really under pressure to cut posts and to save editorial costs. We were coming out of the 2008 financial crisis which really affected South African media pretty badly from an advertising perspective and there were job cuts across the board. A lot of people are focusing on the job cuts that are happening now or that has happened over the last year or two in the South African press but actually there's been a series of waves of cuts which have just gone deeper and deeper not just into just the fat but into the muscle and the bone of South African news rings. And I took over at a time when that was, as editor at the time, was happening across all newsrooms. The *Mail and Guardian* had this weekly health supplement which was kind of a, was more of a wellness focus product. It wasn't very serious health journalism, it had its value, but it wasn't really consonant with the brand of journalism that the is best known for.

It was fine and it helped us to keep doing a bit but not as much as both Mia and I felt was really our responsibility. So we still had health reporting capacity but not as much as we should have and the other newspapers were cutting back even more deeply. So the whole landscape was facing pressure on this area and from a kind of coverage perspective there was a huge amount going on. Of course there was, we had the shift to the new policy on ARVs, you had the debate over insurance and the national scheme ramping up. That started a few years earlier but it was starting to get quite crunchy at that time. In the private sector you had less discussed maybe then it needed to be but increasing concern about rising costs in the hospital sector, rising costs for medical schemes, the disease burdened beyond HIV and Aids is something that people, partly thanks to Aaron Motsoaledi partly because, as the political hit went off HIV it became possible to look at other things again to realise how serious diseases of lifestyle were, how serious other sexually transmitted diseases were, how serious other infectious diseases were, in the South African context. So the newsroom capability, not just in the *Mail & Guardian*, but across all South African newsrooms was shrinking just at a time when it really needed to step up and respond on very complex issues of insurance and regulations on issues of the lived healthcare experiences of millions of South Africans and their rights and relation to that, and I think that we want it a small way to play a part in remedying that widening gap.

<u>Pontsho:</u> You know you were talking about the supplement, so another, besides the interviews with the key people who were involved in the formation of Bhekisisa and its continuing growth, the other aspect of my research is looking at coverage of health issues, and what you've just said I have noticed the supplement was there, I looked at 2012, 2013 and last year. I took three months, randomly three months of articles of that time and in 2012 you see that there's this eight page constant supplement, most of it from what I heard and what Mia told me, it was being paid mostly by Bonitas and it had once in a month that would have the Bhekisisa type thing, but a lot of the time it was like the Health24 *(Dawes: type of stuff)* yes. So in 2013 when Bhekisisa kind of started you see that it still continued but it was just one page, how did that work?

Dawes: That supplement was essentially possible because it was essentially an initiative where the advertiser said we want to see health material, we want our advertising to be associated with health material, you have independent ... editorial independence to produce that material and we'll pay enough money to make sure there are eight pages each time. So we chose the material and it was sort of like having an anchor tenant in the shopping mall, they paid for the advertising, but in order for that to work the costs had to be very low, and that meant mainly syndicated content. So you would see lots of stories from *The Guardian* for example, more likely about health, wellness stories from *The Guardian* or interesting and serious sometimes stories, like science-based stories, that sort of thing, together with some of the softer stuff. But the kind of real reporting on South African and Southern African and regional health policy issues, research, politics, those kinds of things, that's the expensive stuff to produce, that's the stuff Bhekisisa does.

The supplement was an artefact of that advertising arrangement: the content was independent but it was cheap. And you know it did help us to have a bit of diversity of material in the *Mail & Guardian* and have some stuff, which I think was interesting to readers, but not as urgent as from a news perspective as the work that Bhekisisa does. And to be honest, I don't know what has happened with the advertiser relationship since then and the supplement but part of what we wanted to do was to ensure ultimately that we had space in print as well to carry the kind of material that Bhekisisa was doing.

I think this is an important thing for your research, we wanted to mainstream this serious health reporting back into the news section, and make it feel like a news priority, and one of the things that I don't know if, it's something that I've certainly discussed with the

funders a lot and I'm sure it's reflected in some of their reporting that I've said this, that having Mia in the news conference as a champion for health news, as a champion for health news in the front of the book not in that kind of ghettoised supplement section was very important. So you began to see more of the stories that Mia was supervising, in the front of the book up there in the mix with fights in the ANC or the AmaBhungane coverage. And so ultimately that move that you are describing, is in some ways, is the move that we wanted. We wanted the health coverage once again to take its rightful place upfront in the sharp end of the newspaper. And I think that really did happen.

Pontsho: And what was the kind of a relationship you had with GIZ? Did you regularly meet with them, like what was the kind of arrangement from you being the head of the newspaper in which the content that they are paying for is going to appear?

Dawes: I met them many times before the deal was done, to work on the contours of the relationship and the contours of the project, so I guess I would lead those meetings with Mia's help, so I would meet with their country representative and his team and Mia was usually part of. Then subsequently we had a kind of report back mechanism to them around what we have done, to be honest I can't remember exactly the details, but I think it involved both quantitative stuff, like how many stories were published and where were they published and what were they about, and some qualitative stuff around the staffing that we had, and remember part of the model is to do training and outreach work, we reported back to them on that. They didn't have any input into the editorial decisions. They were particularly interested at the outset in, I men their mandate had a component of it that was about HIV but very broadly. So that meant you could also be talking about circumcision or TB or all kinds of other things, or health policy at large because it was all relevant to the environment in which HIV and Aids prevention and treatment and management were playing out. That was something that they stipulated as part of their objective upfront but they didn't have any input in to the actual content that we produced.

Pontsho: I'm going to challenge here, playing devil's advocate. So you say editorial independence is important, so one thing that Mia said and the donors, representatives of GIZ and the gates Foundation, I think there is a bit of toeing the line of editorial independence and because GIZ would not want to give Bhekisisa

any money if there were not covering HIV and policy issues around the NSP. So is that maybe not editorial interference what an influence on content by that...

Dawes: That is exactly what I mean. They are saying we want coverage of this particular area, and as the editor of the newspaper, I thought that that was it was a very important thing to cover. I was concerned already that we were not covering it, so if you have an opportunity to cover it was something that I welcomed. If they had said that we want to fund two pages a week of coverage of real proper journalistic coverage in the *Mail & Guardian* of Tim Noakes's diet, I would have had a very different reaction I would not have set up a team for that. So firstly, as an editor when you do this stuff you have to have an idea of what your purpose is, and it has to be some consonance between the objectives of the funder and the objectives of the news outlet and the identity of the news outlet and its purpose. Some proportionality as well, and you will lose your credibility very quickly if you do not manage some of the softer issues. So I'm not pretending for a minute that the funding did not to some extent, set some parameters on what was covered, but once that's determined then they're out of it. So they say we want some courage of HIV Aids policy, the NSP and manage relating to HIV and Aids, then we say ok we will do that, we will come back to you in six months' time and we will tell you what we did and we are honestly going to say that we think we made the mandate on all of these bases. You might ask us why was the story about HIV, and also well actually because the way circumcision is being handled is important to HIV or whatever. But you are not going to get to call us up and say, 'hey we do not like that expert you spoke to', or 'why did you cover that project not this project' or 'why are you drawing a conclusion from the data that makes us feel uncomfortable that runs counter to our party line as it development founder', that is absolutely out of the question.

Pontsho: Donor funding is for development journalism a lot of the time. For instance, donor funds are social justice, health, or the underreported news, particularly in South Africa there's always going to be money to send a journalist on a story about the Guptas, ANC or the DA. Editors have to choose between sending someone to KZN to cover young pregnant women in a school and the fact that the premier is corrupt, they going to choose the corruption story. So do you think that donor funding fills the gap for the 'less sexy news' but also very important news to be covered?

Dawes: So let me answer you in two ways. One way that I would answer that is yes absolutely it does. I mean, we have a situation, it is being a slow and creeping emergency in South African newsrooms. South African newsrooms capacity to do the work that the South African constitution expects of the press has been battered and beaten back since the late 90s, but in an exhilarating way over the last decade and I think that's a real kind of crisis in South Africans information system. It means that it is very difficult for economic reasons, for the South African press to be responsive to all the things that it needs to be responsive to and to do the job that citizens demand. So donor funding helps to fill that gap, there's absolutely no question even on the sexy stuff which has been breaking all of the corruption stories and the big accountability stories, runs on donor funding, large donors and small donors. You would not have Gupta leaks, I'm sorry to say if it wasn't for donor funding. Where I would make a distinction, is where these stories can be and must be sexy stories as well and one of the things but I am proudest about with Bhekisisa and one of the things I admire the most about Bhekisisa and Mia and all of you, is that it is about bringing the great techniques of journalism and storytelling and real news value to those stories. They are not that kind of developmental journalism it is incredibly boring, no one reads it, put it at the back of the newspaper, kind of stuff. They are compelling stories about real people, real people's rights, urgent political and policy and related questions and they're interesting to read and they matter. That is absolutely critical, and I don't think that Bhekisisa's model would have worked if it was kind of, we will put whatever the donor wants, 'boring broccoli' sort of stories in the newspaper. They would never have found their way into the front of the paper. The news editor would have been prepared to take those things on page 3 and page 5 and page 7. The social media editor would have never been punting those things on the main social handles of the newspaper … We used to have a section in the *Mail and Guardian* called 'Monitor', you can go get some out of the archives, it's completely unreadable. We did not want to do that with Bhekisisa, we wanted real journalism about an issue that is an urgent concern to millions of South Africans, and that could not be more important. Undercover yes, but not dull, and not treated in a way that is deserving of less journalism resources. So these stories are not about getting in a car, going to a project and saying, I went to a project and here I thought they were handing out medicine, or here also babies being weighed, there is real reporting. You know as you have done this, there is real reporting that goes into this stuff. That is really critically important, and that's why I think the model

has worked in the case of Bhekisisa, it has not worked in the case of some other journalism non-profits, which stick to a more 'let me be polite, more dutiful' mode of reporting.

Appendix D: Extracts of interview with Gates Foundation Programme Officer (GFPO)

Pontsho: What do you do at the Gates foundation? What is your role there?

GFPO: I am a programme officer at the Gates Foundation. I make and manage grants to media outlets.

Pontsho: How long have you been doing this?

GFPO: One year and a little over seven months.

Pontsho: Is Bhekisisa one of the programs that you are programme officer for?

GFPO: Yes. Bhekisisa is one of my grantees that is the sort of lingo in the philanthropic world. I am a programme officer over that particular grant. As a partner, I work very closely to Bhekisisa.

Pontsho: How long have you been program officer for Bhekisisa?

GFPO: About the same length of time, slightly under 1.5 years. So about one year and five months.

Pontsho: What does your role being the program officer entail?

GFPO: My role in relation to Bhekisisa specifically or within existing and perspective grantees?

Pontsho: Both, but with a focus on Bhekisisa.

GFPO: My role particularly entails: 1. Identifying potential grantees and then entering a conversation with them and finding out if they are interested in doing the journalism around health. It is one of those genres of journalism that run the risk of falling off the table and not getting anything from the resource cake. So if they are interested, we talk and find out what it is that they want or are interested in doing. Find out what we call strategic alignment. My job then becomes to make a grant, come to a point of agreement and then invite a proposal. A proposal is assessed, not just by me but there is also an entire team, we have the lawyers involved, the finance analysis people involved to make sure that the grantee is sound. To make sure that the reputation and risk for both the grantee and us as the Foundation is non-existent or if it is existent it can be mitigated. Then eventually a grant is made.

Pontsho: You say that if a strategic alignment – what are the strategic objectives of the Gates that would align with the health organisation?

GFPO: So, what that means is as a foundation, as the Gates Foundation focuses on global health and development issues - as a philanthropic organisation. The issues around global health and development then come into alignment with the organisation. So much as there is a lot of need in the world, in countless spheres of human life, the Foundation has chosen to focus on health and development. So that is the beginning of macro for the alignment. Even within the health circle, that is vast. So the Foundation has chosen specific health issues to focus on and to direct its efforts at. This can be found on the website, but off the top of my head, you are talking about things such as malaria, polio, and the tropical diseases. That is when you find out if an outlet would be interested in generating journalism that keeps issues like those on the table so that they do not fall of the table and they are not off the radar. This is for both the users and the policy makers. That does not preclude other health issues, just prioritises those.

Pontsho: So it is like if there is a top 20, certain issues will be in the top 10 that you would want a media outlet to focus on?

GFPO: Want is a strong word – but I would put it this way: if a grantee (this sits within the broader umbrella of editorial independence) ... So the Foundation, we are fierce protectors of editorial independence, extremely passionate about that. It is one of those things that we make sure every grantee commits to, irrespective of the fact that they are getting donor money. Of course, in a relationship between the donor and the grantee, recipient of grants there is a perceivable imbalance of power. The person bringing the money sometimes is perceived to be in a more powerful position and the likelihood of what they are interested in will take precedence, becomes a setting or a backdrop against which some people fear. I think this is where the fear of editorial independence being compromised may come in. At The Foundation that risk is not lost to us, which is why we have committed to ourselves and we commit to the grantee from the onset and during the life of the grant to make sure that editorial independence is protected. So that means that once we have agreed that, yes there are particular issues that are important to a particular country, and these issues happen to be issues that we care about as a foundation, it would be of interest to see that more content is generated about these issues. But we do not tell, and we are very particular that we so not infringe on what is written, how it is written, how these stories are sourced. That is for the grantee to do. It is known that in the past we have had some grantees generate content that has been

critical of the Foundation and we have been absolutely welcoming of that, so much so that when their grant ended we gave them a new grant.

Pontsho: So there is no fear that for example, if I write about the Foundation in this way, this will jeopardise me getting a grant in the future.

GFPO: No, while the fear might be there, it is unjustified. We as a foundation do our best to address it and try to extinguish it. At the Foundation we are aware that we are not perfect, we would be the first ones to put our hands up and admit that imperfection. Why? Because we are just human. Problems that we are trying to address are complex; they have been around for a long time. The solutions are unlikely to be silver bullet. So even with the vast resources that the Foundation might have, the process of trying to engage with potential solution finders, partners, champions, coming up with some form of research and development and all of that – there are going to be mistakes that are going to be made - both in the solutions that I suggested, in strategies that are adopted, that is bound to happen because we are human. So if in the process of working public interest journalism uncovers one of those errors, it is to the Foundation's advantage that those are published because then the Foundation can say 'Ah, this is why we support public interest journalism,' because you are able to identify things that the Foundation might not be able to see because of the mission driven, being unable to see the woods for the trees sometimes. So it is a partnership and that sort of third party observation is helpful. So if in the line of duty, that comes up, it is welcome. We are well aware that as a foundation we are prone to error. We are open to error.

Pontsho: Going back to Bhekisisa, how often do you communicate with – because I know this as someone who works for Bhekisisa with Mia, as our director and editor, how often do you communicate and how often do you need stuff like that?

GFPO: Communicate as often as possible. We try, for example we try and have check-in calls a certain number of times a month, that is agreed between for example Bhekisisa and us. So it could be check-in from once a month to once every two weeks, depending on what time in the grant cycle we are. Some seasons of the grant cycle require more calls, for example if we are coming in for a time that needs to be renewed, then you may have more contact or more calls. In the middle of the grant it might be spaced out a little more. Once every quarter, Bhekisisa submits what we call quarterly metrics and that is simply a report saying how the project is progressing against the agreed goals at the grant agreement stage.

Pontsho: Lastly, what is the interest in health journalism particularly in South Africa for the Gates Foundation?

GFPO: So why are we interested in health journalism? Health journalism, whether in South Africa or Uganda or India has certain outcomes that the Foundation believes are important for the health of everyone. Remember, in South Africa, if certain inequities, and this is true elsewhere, if certain inequities are not addressed, then to have a fully healthy community or society is impossible. One of the things that we as a foundation believe contributes to addressing those inequities is making sure that there is equal access to information, knowledge and awareness. This is then digested and translated into agency. You then create an active citizenry and informed population that are able to give active information news on a personal level and on a corporate level. It also helps to create an 'enabling environment'; it creates an accountability framework, where if more and more people know the importance of health care, it makes it harder for policy makers to side-line the issue. It is really a partnership and the interest case outcomes of increased knowledge and awareness of health issues. Increased engagement around health issues because this will eventually translate into better health policies, accountability around those policies and a sense of ownership and active citizenry amongst the South Africans. This in the long run leads to a healthier South Africa. So it's a pathway really, and the interest in public interest journalism is just an acknowledgment that media is crucial as a tool of agenda setting. Media is crucial for any effort that anyone wants to do, private or public, and that to ignore it will be a half-hearted effort on The Foundation's side – to say that we care about the health and wellbeing of the people of South Africa and bypass the media.

Appendix E: Extracts of Skype interview with GIZ Programme Officer (GIZPO)

Pontsho: So the idea of Bhekisisa came from the underreporting or the lack of visibility of health news within the newspaper and in general within South Africa?

GIZPO: Yes, but with the particular focus on HIV. Some of the other newspapers, with the newspaper cuttings of ... the minister of health reports about mortality, and that journalist simply writes and gets the figures wrong and does not understand the report and writes rubbish. This is a nightmare for the ministry as it can cause a lot of disruption and problems. So while journalists, if they are trained at all, have got a lot more training on, not only writing but also politics and economics, health is not really part of their training. So the issue is also, how you improve the quality of health here. So when I posed the idea to *Mail and Guardian*, a more established newspaper if you are able to establish and complete source of training, other journalists for yourself, but also other newspapers, to be able to write better quality, to get the facts and figures right, and to make a more informed judgement. As an HIV program, Aids program, all health is with HIV. So that probably is South Africa necessarily because a great deal of burden on disease comes from HIV. Seven million people being HIV positive, which is 20% of the population and they gobble up a lot of money. So actually, the only headline or topic that I was given to write, dedicated articles on health, on HIV-related issues, not so much only on the disease but you can also write this one, whether it is about male circumcision, or whether it is about excessive treatment or fake drugs or whatever is the South African National Aids Council doing, what the health insurance organisations are doing and all this talk of drugs. I didn't really give them a topic but the basic outline for the HIV and Aids national strategy and a matter of STIs.

The government has committed itself to achieve certain targets, please in the press, see whether you can follow up on these targets and challenge that not all at once, but when it is appropriate and when it fits with the leadership I know you cannot flood, you need to check with every week what article about HIV and then they get tired. I cannot dictate on that and I do not want to dictate on that. The articles are sent afterwards, to know what you have been writing and to follow up and to see whether basically, they have met the targets. Once in a while, I was highlighting or hinting to them a story or a topic or a person, but it was up to me to decide whether to take it up or not. I never followed up on this one,

as a result. I did not see myself as the one who dictates, I want the newspaper to decide on the news perspective, what is the right views for this particular week. But what I also wanted was for Bhekisisa and Mia to see the editorial team, which decides what, is the priority of the day. This is together with the economics, politics, internal and external politics and who decides about the layout of the newspaper so that you know what others are writing so that you are also highlighting health and/or HIV related issues to colleagues, journalists and colleagues writing on other topics. So if you write about news violence, if you write about unemployment, you should write about degradation, inequality and equity in South Africa. There is always a rule to mention that relationship between the HIV and Aids epidemic. I think in that regard Bhekisisa did a great job.

Pontsho: **Thank you so much. I am sure Mia has heard these compliments more than once already. When it comes to impact, was it a necessary part of GIZ reporting back that Bhekisisa measures its impact through its work, through the articles that it writes and through the kind of whatever extra other work that it did on the side? Was impact important?**

GIZPO: Yes. Impact is always very difficult in a newspaper, but it is a requirement for GIZ. It spent public-generated money. So one requirement was that we wanted to know the number of articles and have a copy of those articles that are being published. With the online edition, you would like to see how many people actually look at it and how long people were there. But I think that is for the newspaper anyhow does, so that was not anything.

Pontsho: It does not get any better than that in terms of pricing policy?

GIZPO: ... Looking on that level of impact is great. Maybe he got a good rating, he is an outstanding minister. I am sure if/when they give a rating of who is a good minister, that Mia Malan has a say whether what really many of the others.

So yes, of course we need to report back, but the requirement was not more that newspaper would any argue. I think Mia, whether she would have received donor funding over there or receive money from the general revenue of *Mail & Guardian*. She would have to report to the minister, who quoted my article when he was giving a speech in parliament. What more can an editor achieve of a national newspaper actually want. My newspaper is cited in Parliament, in a serious debate not in just a smear campaign.

Pontsho: **It is not used as propaganda...**

GIZPO: ... In a serious debate about health insurance. There was an excellent article about health insurance and I really liked the way Mia sort of, got in the scholars from South Africa in order to get the right mix between scholarly articles and the human touch story, together with stories on corruption. If I look at what Bhekisisa has written over the last four/five years, it is a good mix, that a lot of non-journalists would be able to determine that. So for me, I needed to trust the media to be a good journalist, which would not have worked out after the first year. I would have said, "sorry I mean ... the topic that I find very hard, but do not want to interfere in the freedom of a journalist deciding what he writes about". But then I have to pay, then I am an editorial then I am no longer sponsoring journalists.

Pontsho: **Then you are paying for a service...**

GIZPO: I am paying for a service and then she writes the article, but she would write under that this is no longer my opinion but rather the opinion of my donor.

Pontsho: And you did not want that?

GIZPO: No, because I want to read the newspaper, I want to read the opinion of an independent or fairly independent journalist, about something that goes on and the way they are bringing in money from somewhere. We can also see then how they are getting around. So if you read a study on the latest treatment on diabetes and it is promoting a particular treatment regime. There is no clear indication; you will find that that study, I will suspect that that study was funded by the company that manufactures this particular drug. There will always be the clear statement of "who is funding this?"

Pontsho: **And you did not want it to be an unequal ... was editorial importance ... from what you have said now, it seems as if editorial independence was not a priority for people maybe above you, who were just not as interested in media as you are. But for you...**

GIZPO: They are spending public money, and the public money you have to justify.... People are risk verse, people are not so risk averse, they are playing it safe. Of course if you say you have €200 000 and with this €200 000 that is what I get. They want to count each and every line, each and every word, and they want to be. That is fine, but that is a service contract. But with a newspaper you cannot do a service contract, unless you buy editorial space. I did not want to buy editorial space. I wanted to enable the newspaper to do journalism [that it would do] under normal circumstances. That newspaper, the owner of that newspaper, the editor-in-chief would not have been able to allocate enough

time and enough staff because this is not the topic of which we actually sell the newspaper. So if I follow pure economics, I have to hire those journalists, I have to pay those journalists more ... I am wasting my money. So for me it is a matter of risk reduction. ... so yes you can hire this journalist, she is good and she is the best journalist in town, yes you can hire her, yes you can only pay her $1000 but I would allow you to pay her $2 000. ... And you can get your articles at a reduced rate and then publish them. They would have had to pay full cost; he would not have been able to do that. So for me to subsidise a newspaper, to write something, which the newspaper would actually like to do, if it had a bigger available donor. So I see myself as an available donor, but I am not just a donor, I am employed by government. I have to trust that Mia and her team deliver afterwards something which is in line with our fairly general agreement.

Pontsho: So sustainability is a very important part of donors as well?

GIZPO: The idea was once the *Mail & Guardian* sees the benefit and the whole …the whole issue around the national health insurance, the discussion around the arguments with the private hospital groups, with the treasurer and the minister of health. They were very much upfront, but of course it is easier and cannot compete with Guptas and so on. It depends on how the owner of the newspaper looks at it. Luckily they were able to secure money.

Appendix F: Ethical Clearance Approval Letter

REVIEWER'S COMMENTS: HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON MEDICAL)

DATE: 12 September 2017

Applicant's name: **Pontsho Pilane**	**Reviewer's name:** **Ruth Morgan**
Protocol number: **16RM/SLLM/09/12/2017**	
Degree: BA HONS. (MEDIA)	
Title of the research project: Journos just wanna have funds: The impact of donor funding on news content of *Bhekisisa Centre for Health Journalism*	
Comments for the applicant to address on the Ethics Application Form: See notes on form	
Comments for the applicant to address on the Participant Information Sheet: See notes on sheet	
Comments for the applicant to address on the Consent Form: See notes on form You also need a separate audio recording consent form	
Methodological comments for the applicant to consider: **NONE**	
Reviewer's overall comments: Please revise and give to your supervisor to approve	

Recommendation (please indicate):

Accept as is	
Minor revisions	
Moderate revisions	X
Major revisions	
Resubmit	

Please indicate if the Reviewer would like to see the amended version of the Ethics Application Form, PIS and Consent Form:

Yes	
No	X

Appendix F: Information Sheet provided to participants

Participant Information Sheet

Dear Participant

My name is Pontsho Pilane, a registered Master's student in the Department of Journalism at the University of Witwatersrand (Wits). I am conducting a research report on **the impact of donor funding on the content produced by Bhekisisa Centre for Health Journalism at the Mail and Guardian**. The objectives of the study are to determine how donor funding influences Bhekisisa's news content and the roles of journalists at the Bhekisisa. I am inviting you to be part of the study as you are or were a staff member of Bhekisisa. The interview will require approximately one hour of your time and it will be conducted between August and October 2017 at a time and place that is suitable for you. You may refuse to answer questions that make you feel uncomfortable, and may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

There is no compensation for participating in this study and refusal to participate will not involve a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. This research will contribute to further understanding how donor funding works within print media as revenue streams continue to decline.

This research report will be submitted to Wits as part of the requirements for my Master's degree and will be publicly available as all Wits dissertations and theses are available on the worldwide web. A summary of the research available should you request it. Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor. Our contact details are as follows:

Pontsho Pilane: 387521@students.wits.ac.za

Alan Finlay: alan@apc.org or alanfinlay33@gmail.com

Yours sincerely,



Pontsho Pilane

Appendix G: Consent Form for Bhekisisa Staff Members

CONSENT FORM

Research Topic: The impact of donor funding on the content produced by Bhekisisa Centre for Health Journalism at the Mail and Guardian.

Pontsho Pilane
University of Witwatersrand
Masters in Journalism and Media Studies
Student number: 387521
Supervisor: Alan Finlay

- I agree to be interviewed by Pontsho Pilane. The interview will last approximately one hour.
- My participation in this study is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.
- I understand that if I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
- I am aware that notes will be written during the interview and that the interview will be audio recorded.
- I understand that my identity will not be confidential and I will be identified by my job title at Bhekisisa. This information will be in any reports produced using information obtained from this interview.
- I have read and understand the explanation provided to me in the Participant Information Sheet. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
- I have been given a copy of this consent form.

_____ _____ _____

Name and Surname Signature Date

Appendix I: Consent Form for GIZ and Gates Foundation programme officers **CONSENT FORM**

Research Topic: The impact of donor funding on the content produced by Bhekisisa Centre for Health Journalism at the Mail and Guardian.

Pontsho Pilane
University of Witwatersrand
Masters in Journalism and Media Studies
Student number: 387521
Supervisor: Alan Finlay

- I agree to be interviewed by Pontsho Pilane. The interview will last approximately one hour.
- My participation in this study is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.
- I understand that if I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
- I am aware that notes will be written during the interview and that the interview will be audio recorded.
- I understand that the researcher will keep my identity and job title confidential, however the identity of my employer will be public. This will be in any reports produced using information obtained from this interview.
- I have read and understand the explanation provided to me in the Participant Information Sheet. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
- I have been given a copy of this consent form.

_____ _____ _____

Name and Surname Signature Date