

ABSTRACT

Development Communication theories suggest that media plays a critical role in the transformation of societies (Melkote, 2003). In line with this thesis, this research discusses the extent to which news media can provide a platform for social change for women's health issues for the development of South Africa, in the context of the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV (PMTCT). With approximately 29.5% of women attending antenatal clinics throughout the country being HIV-positive, PMTCT is one issue that demonstrates the socio-economic and political complexities of women's health in the context of development.

The qualitative methodological approach involves a thematic content analysis of the news media's coverage around issues of PMTCT between July 1, 2004 and July 1, 2005 in two South African newspapers *The Star* and *The Mail and Guardian*. The methods also involve a thematisation of interview responses from various stakeholders within news media and the case of PMTCT in South Africa.

Empirical studies associate women's access to media with better health and fertility outcomes, irrespective of various income and education levels ("Ch. 10: The Media", 2002). This research report explores the extent to which a commercially driven news media can be for development; particularly for HIV-positive pregnant women can voice their perspectives and make empowered decisions for their health.