

**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF  
ALTERNATIVE MEDIA IN HIV/AIDS  
COMMUNICATION: HIV/AIDS  
COVERAGE IN TWO MAINSTREAM  
NEWSPAPERS AND A CASE OF AN  
ALTERNATIVE NEWSPAPER**

By Teshager Shiferaw

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## List of Acronyms

**AIDS-** Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

**ART-** Anti- Retroviral Treatment

**DHEA-**Dawn of Hope Ethiopia Association

**HIV –** Human Immunodeficiency Virus

**IEC-** Information, Education, Communication

**OVC-** Orphans and vulnerable children

**LWHA-** Living with HIV/AIDS

**PLWHA-** Repose living with HIV/AIDS

**VCT-** Voluntary Counseling and Testing

**NGO-** Non- governmental organization

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## Abstract

Many media researchers doubt the role of the mainstream media as genuine instrument of communication for the poor. The dictates of market mechanism and the interests of economic and political powers are counted as major factors that obstruct the duty of the media in serving the real needs of the society at large.

The standards of news reporting that are rooted in commercial and professional journalism are regarded as instruments that marginalize important social issues such as HIV/AIDS. The craving of the media for prominence and to be authoritative sources tends to deny voice to ordinary citizens who constitute the largest portion of the society. To address the communication needs of the society at grassroots level scholars emphasize the significance of alternative media.

In order to test the validity of the doubt regarding the mainstream media and the significance attached to alternative media this study investigated two mainstream newspapers *Addis Zemen* and *medial* as well as an alternative newspaper *Libona*. The main research questions of the study inquire whether the two conventional papers marginalize HIV/AIDS and people living with HIV/AIDS. The significance of *Libona* in HIV/AIDS coverage was also examined.

The study employed content analysis, which included identifying materials on HIV/AIDS, genres, specific themes, types of news and information sources. Three coders, who participated in doing the job, were in agreement on 87 percent of their coding.

The findings indicated that the sample issues of *Addis Zemen* devoted 2.41 per cent of their total area to materials on HIV/AIDS. Sports and entertainment covered a wider space. The paper is biased towards authoritative sources. These groups constituted 71.3 percent of the sources. PLWHA and ordinary citizens represented only 7.7 and 9 per cent respectively. They appeared to be marginalized. Sample issues of *Medical* newspaper devoted 4.95 per cent to HIV/AIDS. The sources are 67.3 per cent professionals and scientists. Out of 19 HIV/AIDS stories printed in 13 issues only two were local. The papers coverage of the issue appeared to be inadequate in terms of quantity and quality.

*Libona*, which is fully devoted to HIV/AIDS, promotes Dawn of Hope Ethiopia Association and PLWHA. It reflects the perspectives of ordinary people. Horizontal and bottom communication appears real in the paper. However the participation of PLWHA in expressing views in *Libona* is motivated by financial rewards. The paper is supported by donors funding. Inability to sustain itself shadows its significance in HIV/AIDS communication.

*Libona*, as an alternative newspaper, could play more significant role if it encourage free participation of PLWHA in communication. *Addis Zemen* and *Medical* should improve their coverage of HIV/AIDS by entertaining the ideas of ordinary citizens and PLWHA. Their reporting on the issues should reflect the seriousness of pandemic.



# Chapter One

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background of the study

#### 1.1.1. Limitations of mainstream media

The role of the commercial or the mainstream media as genuine instrument of communication for the public is highly questioned. The content of the media is criticized for being considerably influenced and guided by market forces rather than the real needs of the society. Market driven media naturally tend to alienate social issues that are related with the poor and minorities who do not constitute commercially attractive audience (Hyden, et al., 2002: 225; McQuail, 1994: 107, 138; Deane, 2004).

Whether the media content reflects reality or not is another critical problem. The content is presented from the perspectives of those groups who control the media. According to Howley (2005: 16-19) the mainstream media distort facts, portray minority disobedience as violence, misrepresent the marginalized minorities, keep silence on important local issues, lack plurality and diversity and serve the interests of the powerful.

McQuail also indicates that the commercial media is believed to tend to stress against diversity and plurality. He shows a perspective pointing that the mainstream media are more oriented to entertainment, sensationalism and maintaining the status quo (1994: 106,138). According to him *objectivity*, which is believed to be one of the fundamental principles of professional news reporting, is no more than a standard of

commercial journalism that fits the demands of market forces. He indicates that the interest of the mainstream media is linked with business organizations not with public interest groups, labour and the community at the grassroots level (1992:176-177,182).

The intrinsic interest of the commercial media is evident in its philosophy of news value that governs the selection of news stories in the day to day activities of journalists. The poor and the ordinary do not make news. The media always search for elite, powerful and authoritative sources. Prominence is the primary criterion of news (McQuail, 1994: 257, 270-1; Glasser, 1992: 180).

Glasser (1992:177) agrees with McQuail regarding the conformist behavior of the media and explains its principle of objective reporting as an ideology that reflects “the journalist’s claim to action” and yet contradicts with the nature of independent thinking and the “very idea of responsibility”.

Marginalizing the lower stratum of the society by the mainstream media involves several aspects including failure to entertain the voices of the poor and create participatory media environment. The media denies various social groups equitable access to information and accurate representation (Howley, 2005: 21). And it is believed that business based media do not necessarily lead to freedom of thought and expression (Franklin and Murphy, 1991: 106).

One of the serious social problems that affect millions of people and yet marginalized by the mainstream media is HIV/AIDS. Researchers including Downing (1994: 240), Deane (2004), and others show the failure of the commercial media to provide significant coverage for the issue.

## 1.2. Statement of the problem

Providing news coverage for HIV/AIDS and people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) in mainstream newspapers is believed to involve several shortcomings and limitations. Bias, misrepresentation and distortion are some of the defects observed in media coverage of the issue (Emka, 2003). Marginalizing the problem and the affected people is one of the weaknesses of commercial newspapers.

Based on the above assumptions this study endeavours to look in to how Ethiopian mainstream newspapers cover HIV/AIDS. Is the coverage adequate? Is the issue marginalized? The study investigates the questions based on content analysis of *Addis Zemen* and *Medical* newspapers.

It further looks into the advantages and challenges of using alternative media in HIV/AIDS communication. It explains the logical connection between the limitations of the mainstream media and the use of alternative media.

## 1.3. Purpose of the study

The main objective of this study is to investigate the performance of the mainstream media in HIV/AIDS communication and the use of alternative media, particularly alternative newspaper produced by PLWHA in DHEA, which is referred to be the largest and the first association of PLWHA in Ethiopia. The study examines the level of participation of members in deciding the content of the newspaper of the association, *Libona*.

This research also looks in to the newspaper to test whether horizontal and bottom-up communication has been practiced by the community of PLWHA.

Discussing the implications of interactive and dialogical communication modalities and identifying the essential elements of alternative media in the newspaper is part of the study. This involves explaining the meaning of empowerment of the members of the association through participatory communication.

All the undertakings of this study are finally expected to show the significance of alternative media in HIV/AIDS communication. To this end, the study answers the following basic questions:

1. What were the motives that led to the establishment of the alternative newspapers in DHEA?
2. How is the alternative newspaper of the association operating?
3. What are the essential differences between HIV/AIDS coverage in the newspapers of the association and that of the mainstream press?
4. What is the significance of the newspaper for the association and the members?

#### 1.4. Significance of the study

This study is expected to have the following significance:

1. It promotes the understanding of the significance of the alternative media and its potential to empower people at community level by raising their consciousness through participatory communication.
2. Groups and communities who run non-commercial or alternative newspapers could get helpful ideas to maximize the instrumentality of their papers for interactive communication.

3. The study could be helpful in the effort to expand the prevalence of participatory HIV/AIDS communication.
4. It could provide background ideas for further studies in the area and add to the paucity of Ethiopian research in this field.

## Chapter Two

### 2. 1. Problems in conceptualizing the alternative media

Alternative media commonly represent means of communication that counterpose the mainstream media. Their incompatibilities with the latter constitute their essential features. Issues that are absent, marginalized or misrepresented in the mainstream media take the central position in the alternative media and viewed from the perspectives of a group that feels estranged. The content of these media is "an alternative to the traditional media" (Franklin and Murphy, 1991:25). Chomsky says the alternative media

*present people with a different picture of the world, a picture different than the one you get from an indoctrination system based on private control over resources* (Mitchell and Schoeffel, 2003:179).

According to Spitulnik the alternative media encompasses "graffiti, flyers, underground cassettes, internet list-serves, slogans, jokes and rumors" (2002:177). He also indicates that leaflets, cartoons and web pages are elements of these media. They could take the forms and organization of the conventional media (Masilela, 1996:92). Implying that the nature of alternative media depends on specific areas in which they operate Gilboa (1999)says

*In Israel, alternative media include newspapers, television and radio stations and other means of communication such as video cassettes, telemarketing and direct mail that are directed toward groups such as Orthodox Jews, Israeli Arabs, and Russian immigrants.*

It is the negation of human urge to communicate, by the mainstream media, which prompts the emergence of the alternative media as a response of any individual or a group of society to a situation that denies the right of humans to self expression. "When the mainstream media choose not to represent important facets of social or political reality, alternative media flourish" (Downing, 1995: 238).

*[T]his media provide campaigning options not available in the mainstream media, and can be used to reach targeted groups in ways that better fit their cultural and social context and thus be more effective (Gilboa, 1999).*

However, the term 'alternative media' is not the only term that signifies a range of means of communication that counterpose the mainstream media. Various terms such as "small media", "grassroots media", "independent media", "community media", and "local media" are explained by different communication scholars, as media options that challenge the conventional media (Spitulnik, 2002: 177; Howley, 2005: 222; Franklin and Murphy, 1991: 25; Masilela, 1996:107).

Howley defines "community media" in a similar way that various researchers have defined the alternative media. He says

*By community media, I refer to grassroots or locally oriented media access initiatives predicated on a profound sense of dissatisfaction with mainstream media form and content dedicated to the principles of free expression and participatory democracy ... (2005:2).*

According to Mesilela community and alternative media could be defined as one.

*Community media, in reaction to mass media attempt to redefine the communication realm (i.e. the relation between informer and informed) and to enhance, through the acquisition of simple technology, the possibilities that people have of intervening in the process of information production (1996:107).*

Though the terms that are apparently used alternatively with 'alternative media', share common definitional aspects, each one of them emphasize different features. Community media are more related to geographically situated group of people whereas the community of alternative media includes geographically unbounded population such as interest groups or "unity groups" as Chomsky (in Mitchell and Schoeffel, 2003:180) says.

Grassroots media, on the other hand emphasize the media option of the lower stratum of the society which is far from the power center. Melkote explains "grassroots dialogic forums" as a channel of communication for poverty stricken rural areas, urban slums and people living in the peripheries (1991:245).

For Howely, who does not appear to stress on the economic and social heterogeneity of geographically situated local population grassroots media defines local or community media. He indicates that these channels of communication, in addition to promoting free expression and participatory democracy, enhance community relations and promote community solidarity (2005: 2).

Though grassroots media are explained by different scholars as a channel of communication that challenge the mainstream media, it appears that all researchers do not agree that the section of the society, which is regarded as "grassroots" represents

only the economically poor. Howley suggests that grassroots media are part of media work reform efforts, communication scholarship and others (2005:2).

Moreover, several scholars, who commonly understand the mainstream media as instrument of the powerful that marginalize sections of the society, do not take the alternative sphere of communication as an exclusive arena for the poor. The purpose of communication of a group in alternative media may not also be justifiable. Various interest groups use the alternative media.

*The label of alternative media can be applied to a host of different cultural activities. Clearly, they must be alternative to the mainstream media... But that still leaves a great deal of space for variety (Downing, 1995: 239).*

Downing indicates that alternative media "range from the specialized bulletins of different branches of industry that circulate to select executives ... up to parochial news letters (ibid.).

*The notion of alternative media is understood as incorporating a variety of dimensions (differences, independence, opposition and representation) whose importance is determined by parameters of particular struggle (Masilela, 1996: 92).*

The fact that any form of media, that provide communicative opportunity to a certain marginalized group, can make an alternative sphere creates difficulty in searching a clear cut definition for the alternative media. Though alternative sphere is understood based on the limitations of the conventional sphere it could also be hard to draw a line that separates the two. In many African countries, including Ethiopia, private newspapers, which are market driven, serve as alternative to the opposition



groups who do not have access to the government owned media. Kumbala (1995: 178) presents the case of Zimbabwe in this regard.

Even the prevalence of ideas indicating that some big world media firms play roles as alternative communicative sphere shows the fluidity of the term alternative media. Howley identifies the role of alternative media even in the Voice of America (VOA) and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). According to him the role these media played as instrument of anti-communist ideology of the West during the cold war period involves presenting alternative perspectives for the people in the East. He says,

*[G]enerations of Europeans living under communism listened fervently to broadcasts from the BBC and Voice of America (VOA) for news, information, and entertainment. These broadcasts offered a range of alternative perspectives and cultural forms (such as rock and roll music) that contradicted Soviet run media and helped undermine communist authority (2005: 22).*

However, ironically, Howley criticizes the corporate-owned media for keeping silence on important local issues and exhibiting undemocratic character as well as "a tendency to reinforce and reflect the narrowly defined interests of transnational capitalism (2005:18).

Here, Howley's apparent contradiction may be ascribed to the flexibility of the term 'alternative' or his total disregard to his own definition of the public sphere. He says,

*Isolated or "bracketed" from both state and market forces, this public sphere is the space in which a public comes to understand and define itself, articulate its needs and common concerns, and act in the collective self-interest (2005:19).*

Describing western corporate-owned media as providers of alternative perspectives to the eastern world could be regarded as an ideologically motivated discourse rather than a scholarly idea. Chomsky says,

*[I]t is only natural that powerful interests wouldn't want to support genuinely alternative structures* (in Mitchell and Sc haeffel, 2003:27).

According to Masilela the significance of the alternative media in the African context could be assessed based on a number of points. These include sustaining community and social movements, serving as vehicles of praxis and social change, being involved in permanent dialogue with the oppressed (1996: 104-105). She also indicates that “any analysis of the significance and potential of alternative media for political change in Africa” (1996: 103) involves “the role of communication in education and in popular organization and mobilization” (ibid.).

Servaes says UNESCO’s definition of participatory communication, which includes access, participation and self-management, are important and widely accepted as a normative theory of alternative communication” (1996: 79).

However, researchers who agree on several characterizing features of the alternative sphere indicate that there is difficulty in drawing clear-cut definition to these media. Alternative media and participatory communication are “confounded by lack of definitional precision and theoretical cohesion”. (Howley, 2005 :222). Downing (1995:239), who gives a historical account of the alternative media in USA, points out the challenge associated with the task of defining them and the “general absence” of the media from the history of journalism. Gilboa says “The literature on alternative media is not yet sufficiently developed” (1999).

To conclude, various research works indicate that the area alternative media touch is very wide and unbounded. A means of communication that plays an alternative role could also perform a role of mainstream media and vice versa. Specific situations and circumstances, in which mainstream media marginalize a certain group and the preferred means of communication of the group, tend to decide features of alternative media.

Though the media serve marginalized groups of society, the groups could represent range of types that include minority intellectual, cultural, ethnic and religious groups, street people, etc. Thus, it could be said the pattern of communication that alternative media entertain depends on the ideological make up of each group and the level of consciousness of the members. The media could not necessarily lead to realize the empowerment of members of the group they serve through participation, horizontal and bottom-up communication. In principle the media promote the interests of marginalized groups and provide sphere of communication in which each member of the group participate. The overall philosophy of alternative media could also be taken as a criticism of market journalism and the principles of news value in the commercial media. The media appear primarily to be logical consequences that emerged from the deprivation of the right of certain portions of the society to communicate. They could also be taken as a confirmation of Freire's statement that "human existence cannot be silent".

## 2.2. The alternative press

The alternative press is a specific type of alternative media, which includes print communication materials such as leaflets, newspapers, and magazines. Though its essential characteristic features are common to the alternative media, its confinement to the print medium makes it discussible within clear boundaries. The common elements that it may share with the mainstream press, such as form and organization could also be identified with the differentiating factors.

Several researchers, including Downing, Howley, Harrison, Franklin and Murphy, explain the alternative press with its social origins. Even though there are wide gaps and differences among the historical accounts given by the above researchers they share common elements in understanding the essence of the alternative press.

As the emergence of print communication, press and the profession of journalism is intrinsically connected with the growth of capitalist society, the historical origin of the alternative press itself is the outcome of the intensification of contradictions in the society.

Howley, referring to Habermas, links the inception of the alternative press to the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. According to him the historical causes that necessitated this press include “the detrimental effects of commercial media, state intervention into family life, and corporatization of public and private life” (2005:20).

Franklin and Murphy present the alternative press as a recent phenomenon that “began to manifest itself in the late 1960s and early 1970” (1991:25) in Britain.

They also give explanations of the alternative press of the twentieth century Western Europe in reference to “the pauper press of the early nineteenth century” (1991:107). According to them “the pauper press of the 1820s to the 1840s had been primarily dedicated to the propagation of ideas and opinions” (1991: 109) of left-oriented groups. The style and content characteristic features of the contemporary press was adopted from,

*[T]he low-cost radical magazines of the anti-Vietnam and hippie groups in the united states and similar left-oriented publications...*  
(Franklin and Murphy, 1991:25).

Downing goes back to 1760s to survey the alternative press in the United States and attaches its proliferation with the expansion of literary and revolutionary ideas, during this period. He says “many flyers, pamphlets, newspapers, and books circulated as part of the build up to the armed struggle” (1995: 242) during the American War of Independence. According to him the alternative press of the country in the nineteenth century was associated with the working class movement. He indicates that in 1930s and 1840s there were a number of working class newspapers that “strove to bring about changes in the wages and conditions in American factories” (1995:242). Downing also adds that

*Perhaps the most striking example of alternative media in the first two-thirds of the century was the abolitionist press, which urged the ending of slavery... (ibid.).*

Harrison's historical account of newspapers, which may be regarded as alternative, could be included among those indicating the oldest press products in the category under discussion. According to him, it was during the eve of the British

Civil War, in 1614 “did the first break through for a degree of freedom of publication come” (1974:11). And he says,

*The Civil War produced a flood of pamphlets, petitions, and tracts. The ideas they carried to the artisans and apprentices... broke into new territory, extending to atheism and even to early notions of communism (1974:11).*

The contemporary newspapers which have been examined as part of the alternative press reflect the interests of the urban poor, women, minorities, human right movements, and various social and interest groups (Downing 1995: 248; Howley 2005:185). The essential elements of this press have been their emphasis on treating participatory communicative environment for the group they represent. Howley, examining a monthly newspaper called *Hobo News* (1915 :1930), which “was a publication of by, and for migratory workers, so called "Hoboes" ” (2005:63), stresses the participatory nature of the alternative press.

*Street newspapers...encourage contributions from the homeless and the working poor, as well as activists, policy analysts and other whose life and experiences are informed by social, economic, and political marginalization (2005: 63).*

The alternative press gives the poor the opportunity of self-expression. Regardless of their educational status and professional qualification, members of the alienated group from the lower social stratum involve in communication and participate in the management of newspapers.

The papers reflect the needs and aspirations of the poor. They articulate the common goals and interests of the whole group. They are instruments of self-assertion for the marginalized community. They

*Speak with a native eloquence to the conditions of unemployment, poverty, and economic injustice increasingly common in post-industrialized societies, so called emerging democracies and the developing world (Howley, 2005:64).*

Regarding the content of the alternative press, Franklin and Murphy indicate that the papers cover stories the commercial press does not tell. They entertain news and arts that are alternative (1991:110-113). Furthermore investigative reporting is said to be part of the coverage in these newspapers.

*One of the defining characteristics of the alternative press... was its willingness to publish stories about the alleged corrupt or suspect activities of public figures who appeared as pillars of society or authoritative sources of truth in the traditional coverage of news (Franklin & Murphy, 1991: 133-114).*

According to the two authors the news sources of this press include the “people with low status who wish to complain about the powerful” (1991:118).

Nevertheless, the alternative press has a lot of problems arising from its very nature. Questions of ownership, management, production and distribution commonly pose challenges against the survival of the newspapers. Termination of publication and uneven distribution are among the problems facing these papers. Many of them are short lived. Some papers also betray the marginalized groups for which they stand at the beginning and turn into commercialization. Because of the contents they cover they are not attractive for advertisers. (Franklin and Murphy, 1991 : 127 ; Howley, 2005:65; Masilela, 1996:107).

According to Franklin and Murphy, in the alternative newspapers they survey “The classified advertising columns frequently include AIDS help-lines or counseling services for young gay people” (1991:126-127).

However, various authors indicate that the success of the alternative press should not be evaluated based on commercial factors. Masilela says this press is not at all commercial. It is not governed by the common principles and values of practices of professional journalism (1996: 107). According to Atton the alternative press ought to be measured by its “capacity to support and nourish a viable alternative sphere” (Howley, 2005: 223).

### 2.3. The alternative press in Ethiopia

Journalism is a very young profession in Ethiopia. The beginning of the press in this country is related with the coming of Europeans with printing technology at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first newspaper was a French- Amharic newspaper for “campaign against leprosy” printed in 1886 (Shimelis, 2000:6).

The first state owned Ethiopian newspaper, *A'emro* was started at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (ibid, 2000:7).

With the establishment of modern printing press in the country, some fifteen major newspapers appeared before Italy invaded the country in 1935. Between the end of Italian occupation in 1941 and the 1974 revolution, some twenty-seven major newspapers appeared and disappeared. The two government-owned dailies, the Amharic language *Addis Zemen* and *The Ethiopian Herald* are the survivors. After 1974, until the EPRDF's (Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front) control of power in 1991, there were only six, all government-owned, major newspapers (ibid., 2000: Appendices I, III (A and B), III).

Currently, according to the Ministry of Information (MOI), in average 94 various newspapers and 14 magazines are published and distributed through out the



country. Their content covers such topics as politics business, sports, arts, religion, etc. The periodicals are owned by private press enterprises, political parties, professional organizations and others (MOI, 2003).

The history of Ethiopian press and journalism is a reflection of three political systems, which includes authoritarianism in the times of the emperors, totalitarianism of the military regime and the contemporary period which is marked by private press and journalism.

Sommerlad (19--:256) and Shimelis (2000:11) indicate that the press under the previous two regimes completely served the interests of rulers and freedom of expression was absent. Thus, in the absence of enabling environment, the alternative press had no space in the two political systems. Markakis (1975:333) indicates that rumour was the main medium of communication outside the government owned media.

However, alternative press was not totally absent during the two political systems. The first newspaper itself which was printed in 1886 for “campaign against leprosy” could be taken as the first Ethiopian *alternative* newspaper. Though it appeared before the emergence of any commercial newspaper in the country, the issue it covered was a typical area of alternative press. People, who are infected with leprosy, have been the most alienated and stigmatized members of the society.

According to Maeregu (2003: 17) this weekly newspaper, known as *La Semine d' Ethiopie*, was started by a French missionary, to inform the public about the causes and characteristic futures of leprosy and to raise funds for the support of

people affected by the disease. Maeregu indicates that Emperor Menelik II was providing financial as well as moral support to the founder of the paper.

However the newspaper changed into *La Semure d' Ethiopie* (see derivation of Ethiopian civilization) (ibid, 2003: 17), which seems to be a betrayal of the purpose for which it was originally established. Though this researcher has never found materials that explain why the focus of the paper was changed, it could be deduced from the new title of the paper that the rulers of the time wanted the newspaper to serve their ideological interest.

The emergence of the first Ethiopian state owned newspaper itself, *A'emro*, in the absence of any mechanism to produce standard newspaper signifies no more than the birth of an alternative means of communication for the few elite around the palace in a dominantly oral society of the period. It was “written by hand and with a circulation of 24 copies a day, then, 200 following the importation of a copying machine” (Shimelis, 2000: 7).

According to Pankhurst (1985:262) “a literary journal *Goha Tsebah* (Dawn), mainly containing poetry...was produced in 1917” by a notable Ethiopian writer. He also indicates that a number of pamphlets were produced during the time.

Various sources also indicate that during the Italian occupation of Ethiopia (1935-1941), there were different anti-fascist underground newspapers circulating among Ethiopian patriots. *Bandirachin*, which later on came to be a government-owned weekly, and *Yator Ware* were two underground Amharic papers providing freedom fighters with important news and information (Maeregu, 2003: 19-20).

*The Voice of Ethiopia* was another newspaper, edited by an Ethiopian who was living in USA, to rally black American support for Ethiopia during the occupation period. It reflected the anti-colonialist struggle of Ethiopians who were invaded by a powerful European country, Italy. The newspaper,

*...bore the slogans "save Ethiopia" "It is better to die free than live in slavery," and "right will prevail,"* (Pankhurst, 1985:275).

After the end of the occupation period several Ethiopian alternative newspapers were printed. According to Bahru (2002:222) some of the papers were associated with student movement "characterized by the struggle for a free press and free union". *The UC Calls* and *News and Views* were papers reflecting student political trends in 1950s.

The appearance of *Struggle*, a leftist paper of University Student Union of Addis Ababa (USUAA) in 1960s, was a remarkable step in the progress of student political movement in the country. The newspapers of two Ethiopian students unions in North America and Europe, *Challenge* and *Tateq* (Grid yourself) respectively presented the political orientation of the student movement outside the country. *Democracia* (Democracy) and *YaSafiw Hezb Demts* (voice of the broad masses) were underground papers of the two main clandestine leftist organizations of the 1970s. According to Bahru secret Marxist-Leninist study groups used papers to reach out to the public during the outbreak of the 1974 revolution (2002:245). However during the 1974-1991 period of the military regime, which was characterized by complete absence of press freedom, alternative ideas were suppressed with opposition political parties.

The period since 1991, which has been marked by multiples of private newspapers, could be said the flourish of Ethiopian alternate press. Ideas, which were suppressed during the previous regime and those provoked by the contemporary political situation found expression in the private newspapers. According to Shimelis (2000) many private newspapers served as organs of the opposition.

Moreover the emergence of many newspapers as organs of non-governmental organizations, religious and civil societies signifies the prevalence of favorable situation for the alternative press.

To conclude, the place the alternative press holds in the history of Ethiopian press could not be underestimated. Several newspapers played significant alternative roles by articulating the political goals of their creators. However the overall quality of the alternative newspapers in providing communicative environment that empowers the group members they supposed to serve remains to be a subject of further research.

## 2.4 Participatory Communication

### 2.4.1 Top-down versus interactive communication

One of the main elements that signify the limitation of the mainstream media is their top-down communication pattern, which preserves the right to speak to the elite and leaves the ordinary public to keep silent and listen. The problem involves a number of communication challenges that obstruct human development and contradict the fundamental human rights. Several scholars stress that the communication imbalance in any society reflects the prevalence of undemocratic political situations and the concentration of power in the hands of a limited section of

the society. On the other hand the demand of any silenced group to communicate is regarded as a question of empowerment.

According to the *Report by the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems* (UNICEF, 1980:113) withholding and distorting information, denying access to communication and dialogue infringe the rights of the individual to know, to impart and discuss ideas. To impede communication is to reduce men to the status of 'things'... (Freire, 1972:99) Freire indicates that the prevalence of one way or top-down communication entails the existence of unjust social situation. A condition in which some members of the society speak and the rest listen represents domination of the powerful.

*One of the basic elements of the relation between oppressor and oppressed is prescription. Every prescription represents the imposition of one man's choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the man prescribed to into one that conforms to the prescriber's consciousness* (Freire, 1972:23).

On the other hand the emergence of alternative media is the result of the response of marginalized groups of society to the oppressive top-down communication pattern of the mainstream media.

It is an endeavour to change the unidimensional and centralized communication order into multidimensional decentralized sphere of communication. This transformation entails the involvement of members of alienated groups of the society in the process of production and dissemination of information and ideas through horizontal and bottom-up communication. The essential characteristic feature of the alternative media is therefore, its capacity to make participatory communication possible.

Participation in communication is manifested through interactivity and involvement of people at the grass-roots level as well as at all levels of the society in the process of communication. Dialectics and dialogue are intrinsically attached to participation. This mode of communication is characterized by "receiver oriented approach" (Servaes, 1991:83) as apposed to top-down and sender oriented approach.

The implication of participatory communication for the media appears to be far reaching. It is a departure from the conventional elitist approach that emphasizes on professionalism and characterized by hierarchical communication. And Servaes says,

*This "other" communication rejects the necessity of uniform, centralized "expensive" professional and institutionalized media and argues for multidimensionality, deprofessionalization, and diachronic communication exchange (1991:84).*

According to Servaes (1996:78), there are two major approaches to participatory communication,

*The first is the dialogical pedagogy of Paulo Freire (1970, 1983, 1994) and the second involves ideas of access, participation, and self management articulated in UNESCO debates of the 1970s.*

Participatory communication is not, however, something that could easily be realized. Participation and horizontality entail empowerment and equality, which presuppose liberty in political and economic terms. Dictatorship, paternalism and monopoly of power in the hands of a few, which are hostile elements to participatory communication, should be overcome.

The issue of participatory communication is, therefore, fundamentally related to the social emancipation of humans at all levels. Communication experts

recommend structural changes in the society as a precondition for participatory communication (Servaes, 1991:86; Tomaselli and Aldridge, 1986: 69).

The recommendation for structural changes is related with the redistribution of power in the society. Participation also indicates a process of empowerment. Being at the center of the issue, empowerment is viewed from different perspectives by different authors. According to Thomas (1996:25) Freire's conception of emancipation from estrangement through involvement and praxis appears to entail empowerment.

Empowerment is a process through which the subject reunites itself with the object. It is a transformation from living 'with' the world to living 'in' the world. For Freire "Living 'with' the world implies an 'objective' distanciation from the world" (Tomaselli and Aldridge 1996: 64-65). Though the two authors say that this is an assumption which implies manipulation through language, it, however, appears to depict human alienation or de-humanization, because Freire says,

*...Men as beings who cannot be truly human apart from communication, for they are essentially communicative creatures (1972: 99).*

According to him the process of emancipation begins from critical consciousness and leads to freedom from alienation. It is a struggle against dehumanizing elements of the society. Through praxis, which involves action and reflection, humanity develops critical consciousness about the world, the social reality in which it lives and proceeds to understand and change it and place itself in a legitimate social context (1972: 15,60).

Riano's explanation of communication within the framework of Freire's concept indicates that the individual's involvement in communication process is

aimed at raising consciousness about “his or her situation of oppression, by community animation and activation or organization process and social change” (1994:14).

Her perspective shows involvement as an important element in the process of communication. She says,

*The target group is more or less involved in the process of building a participatory message from needs assessment through media production to final evaluation and effectiveness (1994:10).*

According to her, at this point the essence of involvement in the process of communication is empowerment that leads individuals to benefit from development and “bring about people's control over economic and political forces” (1994:10).

However, discussing empowerment under the topic “alternative communication: participation for social change” Riano brings a more realistic view of empowerment. She says,

*The recognition of power differences in society implies that empowerment is not a matter of individuals controlling economic and political conditions, but rather of their joining social movements and struggles for the transformation of these conditions (1994:12).*

She further explains empowerment, which is realized through taking part in the course of communication as a process of enabling individuals to decide on their own living conditions and to define themselves in their own way (1994: 18).

According to Servaes “Participation involves the more equitable sharing of both political and economic power...” (1998: 85), while participation in UNESCO’s perspectives includes “higher level of public involvement in communication



systems”, on the one hand, and “may be no more than representation and consultation of the public in decision – making” (1998: 85) on the other.

It could be understood from the discussions of various authors that participatory communication and empowerment could be defined in different forms within different social and economic contexts. Participation as a factor of development in a context of rural women in Africa and participation in community media in North America provide different pictures of participatory communication and empowerment.

## 2.5. Challenges of HIV/AIDS communication

### 2.5.1 Shortcomings of mainstream media in HIV/AIDS coverage

The mainstream media coverage of HIV/AIDS and the overall HIV/AIDS communication are critically questioned since the last several years. Critics portray the commercial media as an arena in which HIV/AIDS reporting is characterized by distortion, misrepresentation, bias and sensationalism. During the early periods of HIV/AIDS the media language tends to be loaded with highly subjective and exaggerated messages that could have negative implications against positively living with HIV. The media presented,

*... [T]he photos of emaciated PWAs (people with AIDS) rather than the healthy HIV- positives. ... Media terms for AIDS Have ranged from "black death" and "scourge of the twentieth century" to "lethal pandemic unparalleled in human history" and the ever-present "plague" (Emke, 2003).*

According to Emke these defects of the mainstream media mainly originate from the very nature of the structure and organization of news work. "Many of the

shortcomings in AIDS reporting have resulted from journalistic conventions, rather than being specific to AIDS" (ibid. 2003:71).

Bennett provides an example how the news works standards and professional journalistic ethics in the mainstream media could be sources of silence and distortion in HIV/AIDS coverage. Based on his experience in UK, he points out that

*It took over two years for the mainstream media to explain that one way in which... AIDS is spread is through anal intercourse... [T]he decency code governed information content about AIDS. Early stories suggest that the disease transmitted "not through casual contact," and through the "exchange of bodily fluids" (1988:129).*

According to Bennett the ethical standards of news writing in the mainstream media operate to avoid words and ideas that are believed to offend the middle-class news consumers. And this "removes from the public awareness many undesirable but true aspects of the real world" (1988:127).

Stein indicates that the reluctance of the media to give coverage for important social issues or their unjustifiable silence towards HIV/AIDS causes severe damage on the life of humans. He mentions an argument that "in America people died because the media did not like covering stories about homosexuals" (2001:6). This appears to emphasize the most possible damage that could be caused by the silence of the media on critical issues such as AIDS.

Stein's review of literature on HIV/AIDS coverage agrees with criticisms that stress the limitations of the conventional media. Negative attitude towards PLWHA, fear, confusion and prejudices regarding HIV/AIDS are taken as the products of misleading and wrong messages by the media (Stein, 2001:6).

Various arguments show that PLWHA are marginalized by the mainstream media in a number of ways. It appears self evident that for journalists, who claim to be neutral and objective in presenting the news HIV/AIDS is 'a' problem and PLWHAs are 'they' not 'we'. The perspectives of the people infected and affected by HIV is notably absent as a major form of news reporting. PLWHAs who seek support and compassion have been portrayed as weak.

*An analysis of the coverage of African and European daily newspapers reveals...that the objects of AIDS news are usually HIV positive people while the subjects are usually HIV/AIDS specialists or government officials (Stein, 2001:7).*

The arguments of several researchers including Emke, Bennett and Stein provide evidence that the weakness of the mainstream media in HIV/AIDS reporting is deeply entrenched in their organizational and professional ideologies. According to Stein (2001:7) the failure of the media to conceptualize its role as an agent of social change in HIV/AIDS communication is intrinsically connected with its claim of neutrality which is “contrary to reality as the mass media do educate people”. “If we are to understand why AIDS is represented as it is, we must acknowledge the way in which information becomes ‘news’” (Emke, 2003).

Emke stresses that most of the problems related with content of HIV/AIDS news are inherent to the mainstream media. The pattern of selecting sources, themes, way of presentation and other news “rituals” pose challenges to the real communication needs of the public. One of the problems is “the tendency to construct stories around individuals and personalities, rather than structures and social forces” (2003).

“[J]ournalists often value status and authority over other criteria in assessing the reliability of information” (Williams & Miller, 1995:421).

The criterion of selecting individuals as the central element of news stories involves several repercussions including narrowing news sources and marginalizing the wider section of the public. The common values of news such as prominence alienate the ordinary mass members of the society. Emke seems to identify two sources for this tradition of news making in the western culture and demand of the market: 1. individualism, 2. style of “story telling where by readers are drawn into the narrative through ‘identification’ with other persons” (2003).

This tradition of the conventional media authorizes individuals to define issues for the public. Repeated appearance of individuals as sources of news builds images of personalities at the expenses of masses of audiences.

Another debatable issue raised by both Emke and Stein, as one of the causes of distortion and failure of the media, is the tradition of simplifying news to fit to the level of understanding of the common audience. Stein argues that

*The scientific aspects of AIDS are often simplified by the media - thus failing to provide either adequate social perspective or sufficient analysis and context to the scientific evidence presented (2001:6).*

For Emke simplification of social events and phenomena in reporting ranges from reducing sources of content to individual level and personifying news to framing of stories to “the appropriate cultural contexts and meanings, in an effort to make the story more immediately understandable” (2003). The common news criteria such as deviance and oddity appear to be the outcomes of news framing, and function as

filter or gatekeeper “to select parts of experience for special attention and closing off other views and voices” (McQuail, 1994:66).

To conclude, the tradition and work ethics of the mainstream media which is founded on commercialism involves serious conflicts with the evolving imperatives of effective HIV/AIDS communication which includes providing adequate coverage, perspectives of PLWHAs and focusing on social and cultural elements that spread HIV.

### 2.5.2. A shift to development communication

Several evaluations indicate that the challenges of HIV/AIDS communication since the 1980s were associated with lack of a comprehensive and integrated understanding of the pandemic. During the early periods it was assumed that disseminating information about HIV would result in behavioral changes of individuals and halt the spread of the virus. Later improvements brought programmes “that drew on psychosocial and cognitive approaches that educated individuals in practical skills to reduce their risk of infection” (McKee, 2004:41). The tendency was to regard HIV/AIDS as an isolated public health issue.

According to various researchers the western communication theories and models which focus on the individual failed to be successful in Africa and other less developed regions. The failure of the theories and models emanates mainly from the fact that they were products of a alien social, economic and cultural environments. Targeting individual behaviour without challenging the social factors that shape behaviour is among the limitations of the approaches (UNAIDS/ PennState, 1999: 9, 23; McKee et al., 2004: 43).

Deane indicates that HIV/AIDS communication has suffered from one-dimensional, top-down, indoctrinating approach. It has also failed to respond to social problems that are causes of the spread of the epidemic. Moreover “It treated people as objects of change rather than the agents of their own change” (2004).

Examining the challenges of HIV/AIDS communication, a UNAIDS initiative has proposed a redirection of approaches. One of the key elements that represent the new direction is contextualization of theories and models of communication to the areas of application.

*[T]he logic and theory of HIV/AIDS strategies ought to evolve from within the meanings and values of the affected population (UNAIDS/ PennState, 1999:9).*

The new initiative, the *Communication Framework for HIV/AIDS*, was developed through the participation of researchers and practitioners mainly from developing countries and 20 per cent from developed countries (ibid, 1999: 5).

The communication framework as well as several scholars emphasize that the new approach should overcome the limitations of the old one by focusing on social change. According to McKee et al. the new approach represents a paradigm shift which is characterized by targeting social norms, expanding to coordinated social movement and community level activities (2004: 30-31).

However, the criticism that has been forwarded against paternalistic communication is not new. It is related with the scholarly struggle against indoctrination and subscription in favour of empowerment of people through participatory approach. It dates back to

*[T]he dialogical pedagogy of Paulo Freire and the ideas of access, participation and self - management articulated in UNESCO debates" of the 1970s (Servaes, 1999: 84).*

The idea has been strongly highlighted by scholars, who realized the failure of modernization economic theories of the west that emphasize transfer of technology, way of living and thinking from the west to the rest of the world, as a way to development. It signifies a paradigm shift to participatory communication and a departure from the old prescriptive concept of development (Melkote, 1991:76: Kumar, 1994:86: Servaes, 1996:78).

The failure of prescriptive HIV/AIDS communication to be effective in Africa and other less developed regions in the last two decades of the twentieth century appears to necessitate the adoption of alternative development communication, which is articulated to enable people to take part in planning and implementation of social activities. The new approach is expected to set HIV/AIDS communication in a wider social, economic and cultural context in which local efforts gear towards comprehensive solutions. The new framework by UNAIDS (1999) also identifies the domains of context which includes government policy, gender relations and spirituality.

The framework suggests addressing “the impact of poverty on individuals...” and mainstreaming HIV/AIDS with other existing social and development problems (1999:34). It also stresses the importance of “a process of public debate, informed by good quality information” (1999:31). According to McKee this paradigm shift to a strategic communication to social development, including HIV/AIDS requires to move beyond 'business as usual' (2004:30-31).

The shift to participatory HIV/AIDS communication implies the necessity of searching for appropriate media that accommodate horizontal and bottom-up communication.

## Chapter Three: Methodology

### 3.1 Method of the study

In the literature review of this study it is indicated that several communication scholars argue that the mainstream media do not represent genuine communication channels which promote the interests of society in general and the poor in particular. Critical social issues such as HIV/AIDS are said to be marginalized by the media, and some researchers recommend alternative media as a solution to fill the communication gap. Hence this study undertook verifying this argument by investigating two mainstream newspapers, *Addis Zemen* and *Medical*, and an alternative newspaper, *Libona*.

Studying coverage of certain issues in newspapers involves considering several elements of content presentation including volume, which could be explained in terms of space. The appearance of specific themes, sources of information, social groups, places, representation and ways of presentation and others could be examined. And such an undertaking requires an appropriate method of study.

In order to examine whether a mainstream newspaper marginalizes an issue or not, it would be important to have a measurable element such as space devoted to print material dealing with the issue. Based on such quantifiable and objective units, it could be possible to get a clear picture about a given coverage. Since the question



of marginality in media coverage is directly related to insufficiency, primarily in terms of quantity, this study employs content analysis. The method is appropriate to study a adequacy of various kinds of coverage by newspapers, “in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner” (Stempel III, 1989:124-125).

### **3.2 Data sources of the study**

The task of examining *Addis Zemen* and *Medical* in order to test the idea that the mainstream media do not give adequate coverage for HIV/AIDS needs to focus on print stories in the newspapers. The relevant unit of analysis for this study is text material including news stories, editorials, articles, letters and others. However pictures and graphics that complement text materials on the issue are taken into consideration only for the sake of space they cover. The specification of this unit of analysis is based on the fact that the required information includes the area devoted to HIV/AIDS issues, and the level of participation of ordinary citizens and PLWHA in expressing themselves and others. The sources of data for this study are the materials printed in the newspapers. Interviews conducted with authorities in DHEA are also used as additional material. The materials quoted from a brochure of the association were originally in English. Quotations from the words of the president and executive director of the association as well as materials that are taken from *Libona* and included in the body and appendices of this study were originally in Amharic. The translation is mine.

### **3.3 Sampling of the study**

#### **3.3.1 Limitation and delimitation of the study**

This study selected two mainstream newspapers: *Addis Zemen* and *Medical*. The papers are selected based on the fact that both are among high circulation newspapers. Moreover, *Addis Zemen* is the only government paper that appears daily in the Amharic language. *Medical*, a private weekly newspaper in the same language, is selected because of its large circulation and specialty in the area of health. The process of dealing with these newspapers involves measuring the coverage given to HIV/AIDS and examining the nature of presentation of the issue.

The selection of *Libona* monthly newspaper, the organ of DHEA, is based on the following facts: first, it is the only newspaper fully devoted to HIV/AIDS at least in Addis Ababa, it is freely distributed to members of the association, it has a relatively wide circulation (5,000 copies per issue), it does not publish advertisements, and perhaps most significantly, news and articles appearing in the paper are contributions from members of the association. These facts differentiate *Libona* newspaper from other commercial newspapers. From the outset it could be taken as a good example of an alternative newspaper, because as several scholars indicated non-commercialism and non-professionalism, promoting special issues, communities and interest groups are the common features of these newspapers. According to the association's official information DHEA is:

*...committed to the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS and to address the protection of the basic human rights of PLWHA, their families and dependents, through awareness creation, advocacy and provision of care and support (1998: 2).*

Regarding sampling for *Addis Zemen*, this research took 10.4 percent of the total population of 365 days' editions from September 2004 to August 2005, and this

constitutes 35 editions. The sample is limited to only 10.4 percent of the total population, because organizing and analyzing data from a larger sample was found to be unmanageable in terms of the very limited time and other resources available to do the research.

Where the weekly *Medical* newspaper is concerned, this research takes 13 editions out of the total population, which constitutes 52 editions of one year from September 2004 to August 2005. The sample represents 25 percent of the total population.

The study also looks into all ten editions of the monthly paper *Libona* from September 2004 to August 2005. Two editions of January and February 2005 were not printed.

The research employs both quantitative and qualitative methods. The former is used particularly to see whether the two selected mainstream newspapers reflect the characteristics that are indicated as the limitations of the conventional media in the statement of the problem. Qualitative in addition to quantitative analysis is applied to investigate *Libona* as an alternative newspaper based on the assumption that papers under the category “alternative media” provide a participatory communicative environment conducive to better understand and change actual social problems.

This research emphasizes on the qualitative aspect of HIV/AIDS coverage in *Libona*, because it would not be fair to compare the quantitative aspect of its coverage with that of *Addis Zemen* and *Medical* which are dealing with general issues. In ten editions of *Libona* news stories, editorials, articles and other materials cover 105,894 cm<sup>2</sup> (the total area of the paper), while *Addis Zemen*'s space covered by materials on

the issue in 35 sample editions is only 20,769.30 cm<sup>2</sup>. *Medical* used 11,240 cm<sup>2</sup> of its space to deal with the same theme. However the study looked into the quantitative aspects of *Libona* towards sources, specific themes and others.

### **3.3.2 The categories and reliability of coding**

In order to measure various aspects of HIV/AIDS coverage in *Addis Zemen* and *Medical* newspapers, this study constructs the following seven main categories and sub categories:

1. Is there any text on HIV/AIDS?
  - yes, no
2. Type of the text genre
  - news, editorial, article, letter, others
3. Space covered by text (in cm<sup>2</sup>)
4. Theme of the text
  - Anti-retroviral Treatment (ART)
  - Care and support
  - Living with HIV/AIDS (LWHA)
  - Orphans and Vulnerable Children(OVC)
  - Prevention
  - Scientific research on HIV/AIDS
  - Stigma and discrimination
  - Voluntary Testing and Counseling (VCT)
  - Others
5. Sources of news and information

- Donors and NGOs/representations
  - Government offices and officials
  - Ordinary citizens
  - People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA)
  - Professionals and scientists
  - Religious authorities and celebrities
6. Placement of the news in the newspaper
- Page 1
  - other pages
7. The origin of the news story
- Addis Ababa
  - Administrative regions
  - External

One of the challenges in content analysis is related to constructing effective categories which are pertinent to the objectives of the study, functional and manageable (Stempel III, 1989 :128). In order to construct relevant categories, this research used the following questions that are directly related to the problem statement of the study:

1. How many news stories, editorials, articles, letters and other text materials are printed in the newspaper under scrutiny?
2. How much space is devoted to the text materials on HIV/AIDS?
3. Who are the sources of news stories and information on HIV/AIDS?

4. Do ordinary citizens and PLWHA appear as sources of news and information on HIV/AIDS? How frequently?
5. Which sources are the most frequent sources in news and information on HIV/AIDS?
6. How many HIV/AIDS news stories were from the capital, administration regions and external sources on HIV/AIDS?
7. How many HIV/AIDS news stories appeared in the front page of the newspaper?
8. What are the reasons that made the HIV/AIDS news stories appear in the front page?
9. What are the themes that appeared in text materials on HIV/AIDS?
10. Which themes on HIV/AIDS are the most frequently dealt with?

Regarding the functionality of the categories, one critical point could be raised here. It is pointed out that functionality is measured by the effectiveness of the categories in generating information or data that reveal features of media work or production which are under the control of journalists including reporters, editors and cameramen. Stempel III says:

*In suggesting that categories are functional, we are assuming that a content study intends to say something about a media process and the decision making within that process (1989:129).*

Therefore we understand that categories which detect positive or negative elements in the media coverage of various issues that are out of the control of the journalists could not be valued as functional.

Based on this assumption, a doubt could be raised about the functionality of the seventh category of this study, which is set to identify the regions news stories cover in three subcategories: Addis Ababa, administrative regions, and external sources. One could ask whether the number of HIV/AIDS news stories from the capital, Addis Ababa, could reflect the bias of the media towards the city or not.

Since the capital hosts multiples of institutions that generate newsworthy information and events, more than any of the other regions of the country, the number of news stories from the capital appears to be out of the control of the media. One of the least developed regions, for example, Benshangul - Gumz may not be expected to be a source of more news stories than the capital, as it is commonly believed that volume of news and information reflect the level of economic, social and political development.

However, this may not necessarily always be true. News stories are not always reports of actual events and phenomena which are out of the control of the media. This thesis argues that media practice goes beyond the conventional duties of reporting daily events. According to the theory that stresses the agenda-setting role of the media, “the press is not a mirror that reflects the realities of society as they are” (Severin and Tankard, 2001: 240). News also reflects the concern of the media regarding various important social issues that are beyond public attention. Identifying and dealing with key issues in the society is a role of the media. Therefore, it could be concluded that the number of news stories in newspapers on particular issues involve the decisions of journalists, and a category set to search for the number of news could be taken as functional.

Moreover the number of categories in this study could be taken as fairly manageable. Though there are more than ten sub-categories, the main categories are only seven.

The other important issue that needs to be discussed in relation to the method of this research is reliability of coding. According to Stempel III (1989:132), reliability is a concept concerned with the consistency of classification or category. The categories of this study, except the fifth which is related with the type of sources, are proved to be highly consistent in the coding of three coders, including this researcher. (One of the two coders is a graduating year extension student of English language and a teacher for seven years. The other one has a college diploma in accounting and an experience of eight years in news proof reading.) The agreement of the data of the three coders on the presence or absence of any text on HIV/AIDS (news, editorials, articles and letters), in identifying the genre of the text, themes, in measuring the space covered by text materials in cm<sup>2</sup>, in counting the number of news stories on page 1, and in identifying the regions that the news stories cover was 89 per cent.

However, the agreement between the three coders in identifying sources of news and information was 82 per cent. As it is indicated by Stempel III,

*Disagreement between coders is usually the result of one of three things: (1) inadequate definition of categories, (2) failure of coders to achieve a common frame of reference, and (3) oversights (1989:132).*

And this researcher believes that the discrepancy of the coders is the outcome of the above factors. Though disagreement at the beginning of coding was high in this



study, an endeavour was made to minimize it by merging some sub-categories such as “government officials” and “officials”, “donors” and “NGOs” including their representatives, “religious authorities” and “celebrities”, “professionals” and “scientists”. For example, during the initial stage of coding, there were cases in which directors of government hospitals, who are also medical doctors, were taken as both government officials and professionals. Regarding the category of themes, news stories on scientific research on ART were taken as “ART theme” in one, and as “scientific research” in the other.

Therefore in an attempt to increase the reliability of some categories on themes and sources more precise definitions were given. Some of the improved definitions include the following:

1. Any news story of scientific research on ART, care and support, stigma and discrimination and others is categorized as scientific research on HIV/ AIDS.
2. News stories and other text materials on any practical activity including meetings focusing, for example, on VCT, are categorized under VCT.
3. In cases where two or more related major events and themes are reported in one news story, each theme is counted separately and the regions covered by the stories are also taken to different sub-categories of Addis Ababa, regions, and abroad.
4. Professional sources speaking on policy and related matters in their capacity as government officials are categorized as officials.

Based on the first trial of coding, a category that was set to deal with words, which appeared in text materials "in favor" and "against" PLWHA was cut out. Even

though the category was assumed to provide helpful data that shows whether PLWHA are alienated or not, it was omitted not to include "word" as an additional unit of analysis other than "text". This has kept the categories to a manageable level.

Therefore it could be said that the categories that are set through the above procedure are relevant to the purpose of the study. The data and information that is generated using these categories is expected to provide answers for the research questions set in the first part of this study. The first category helps to identify the presence or absence of any text material on HIV/AIDS in the newspapers. If the answer is "yes", the following six categories will provide information on several specific quantifiable elements of the coverage. Hence based on the data it could be possible to conclude whether the newspapers marginalize HIV/AIDS, tend to be biased towards the powerful and the elite, alienate the interests of ordinary citizens and PLWHA, and so on.

## Chapter Four: Findings

### **4.1 *Addis Zemen* and *Medical* as mainstream newspapers**

In many cases, media researchers tend to use the terms "mainstream", "conventional" and "commercial" newspaper to refer the realm of the press which is outside the alternative media. The terms appear synonymous in the usages of several communication text books. In the literature review of this study too, the phrases have been used interchangeably.

However, in this part of the study a closer examination of two different newspapers, the government-controlled *Addis Zemen* and the privately-owned *Medical*, require differentiating terms.

As it is explicitly indicated in the officially published editorial policy of the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), which is the authority running *Addis Zemen*, the purpose of the newspaper is to promote the policies of the government (EPA:2002:28).

Moreover, the agency sells a copy of this broadsheet newspaper for only 0.50 cents (before July 2005), while private tabloid newspapers with the same number of pages as *Addis Zemen*, sell for two birr and above. Even though copy price is not necessarily an indicator of profitability of newspaper business, especially in a market where advertising revenue constitutes a significant portion of newspaper income, the copy price of *Addis Zemen*, which is one of the lowest, could be taken as an element to show that the paper is not commercially orientated.

Hence, rather than the term commercial, it would be appropriate to use mainstream or conventional to identify the newspaper. The identification of *Addis Zemen* as a non-commercial mainstream newspaper could provide a frame in which the pattern of its HIV/AIDS coverage is examined.

*Medical*, on the other hand, is a private newspaper run by Medi I.E.C-Medical Information Publisher Enterprise. It is registered according to the commercial law of the country and works for profit. Hence the paper could be identified as a commercial mainstream newspaper.

Health, which is area of speciality for this newspaper, and the paper's category in the commercial press, would be examined as elements that influence its HIV/AIDS coverage.

## **4.2 HIV/AIDS coverage in *Addis Zemen***

As it is stated at the beginning of this study, the theoretical background to examine the pattern of HIV/AIDS coverage in *Addis Zemen* constitutes mainly that the mainstream media are biased towards the powerful and tend to marginalize issues that concern the poor. The doubt that is reflected in a great deal of media research regarding the instrumentality of the mainstream media for horizontal communication is one of the perspectives through which this study examines the newspaper.

The coverage given to HIV/AIDS in the newspaper is tested based on several elements, including the number of news stories, editorials, articles, letters and other genres. Themes, including stigma and discrimination, prevention, LWHA, care and support, ART and VCT are identified in the text material and their frequency is noted. Sources of HIV/AIDS news and information are also tallied and examined after being investigated to see if there is any bias towards the powerful.

The study focuses on 35 editions of this daily newspaper which are randomly selected using systematic sampling in ten intervals out of 365 editions of 12 months. All the 35 sample editions printed 70 HIV/AIDS news stories. Other genres on the issue that appeared in the editions include six articles and a letter. Out of 70 news stories, 58 or 82.8 percent are local while 12 or 17.1 percent are foreign.

**Table -1 Theme of HIV/AIDS news stories in *Addis Zemen***

Theme Number	of news	Percentage
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	<b>stories</b>	
ART	2	2.85
Care and support	7	10.00
LWHA	0	00.00
OVC	7	10.00
Prevention	34	48.57
Scientific research	3	4.28
Stigma and discrimination	5	7.14
VCT 1	0	14.28
Others	2	2.85
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>99.97</b>

Regarding specific themes on HIV/AIDS, 34 or 48.57 percent of the news stories are on prevention and 14.2 percent on VCT. Issues of care and support and OVC, each appeared in 10 percent of the stories. ART, stigma and discrimination are among the themes that appeared in less than 10 percent of the stories.

Out of 77 major sources that were referred in 70 news stories, 40 or 51.9 percent were government offices and officials. Donors/NGOs and/or their representatives hold 19.4 percent of the source of news stories. Among the least referred sources, PLWHA and ordinary citizens hold six and seven percent of the sources respectively.

**Table-2 Sources of HIV/AIDS News in Addis Zemen**

<b>Sources</b>	<b>Number of appearances</b>	<b>In Per cent</b>
Government offices and officials	40	51.94
Professionals and scientists	7	9.09
PLWHA 6		7.79
Ordinary People	7	9.09
Donors/NGOs and their representatives	15	19.48

Religious authorities and celebrities	2	2.59
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>99.98</b>

Regarding the placement of HIV/AIDS news stories, eight or 11.4 percent appeared on front pages of the newspaper. The major sources of these front page news stories include five government officials, a government office, and participants of a meeting constituting ordinary citizens in a group, a donating association and a scientific research output. The sources of nearly half of HIV/AIDS news stories (45.6 percent) were in Addis Ababa and foreign countries.

Six or 1.7 percent of the 35 editions of the newspaper printed no material on the issue of HIV/AIDS. More than a third or 40.86 percent of the space given to HIV/AIDS in this newspaper is concentrated on the weekly column devoted to the subject. Out of 20,769.30 cm<sup>2</sup> area covered by news, articles and other materials in the issue 8,388.25 cm<sup>2</sup> was the share of five Tuesday editions of the paper.

**Total-3 Area of Addis Zemen in 35 Sample Editions in cm<sup>2</sup>**

Sample Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total		
September	38,115	29,645			21,175	21,175	25,410	21,175	21,175	<b>177,870.00</b>
November	21,175	25,419			16,940	25,410	21,175	21,175	25,410	<b>156,704.00</b>
January	25,410	25,410			16,940	25,410	25,410	25,410	29,645	<b>173,635.00</b>
April	29,645	29,645			16,940	25,275	29,645	25,410	29,645	<b>186,205.00</b>
June	21,175	25,410			16,940	25,410	25,410	25,410	25,410	<b>165,165.00</b>
	<b>Grand Total</b>								<b>859,579.00</b>	

**Table-4 Total Area of Addis Zemen in 35 Sample Editions Covered by HIV/AIDS News Stories and Articles in cm<sup>2</sup>**

Sample Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total		
September	1135.80		551.30	589.00		1671.55	45 1.75	1093.50	-	<b>5492.90</b>
November	556.50		-	605.60		1757.80	48 2.60	537.80	516.60	<b>4456.90</b>
January	223.50		285.00	896.50		2100.80	-	195.30	293.30	<b>4694.40</b>
April	719.10		796.30	312.80		1438.10	12 3.50	225.50	-	<b>3615.30</b>
June	165.00		-	250.00		1420.00	21 7.30	457.50	-	<b>2509.80</b>

<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>20,769.30</b>
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Another important point to be noted here is the decline of coverage for HIV/AIDS in the sample newspapers which are selected in April and June 2005, the months before and after the May 2005 national election. (The systematic sampling method employed in this study misses the month of May.) The coverage given to the issue by the seven editions of June 2005 was less by half than that of the coverage given by seven editions of September 2004.

### **4.3 Implications of the data for HIV/AIDS coverage in *Addis Zemen***

The pattern of HIV/AIDS coverage in the government-controlled *Addis Zemen* appears to create an impression that the issue has been given due attention. The paper devotes for the subject a weekly column which sometimes covers a full page. Other days' editions also present news and articles on the topic. The data gathered from 35 editions of the sample shows that, in average, the paper prints two news stories in every edition.

However, the adequacy of the coverage in terms of quantity, types of sources, pattern of presentation, themes and the places that are covered in the news could be questioned. Out of the total area of the sample issues of the newspaper which constitutes 859,579 cm<sup>2</sup>, news stories, articles and other related materials on HIV/AIDS cover 20,769.3 cm<sup>2</sup>. That is only 2.41 per cent. Out of this, the share of news stories is 1.3 per cent. HIV/AIDS is a far less covered issue in the newspaper when compared with other themes such as sports. The sports full page column, which appears twice a week, covers an area of 4,234 cm<sup>2</sup> in a week. In the 35 editions of the sample, sport covers an area of 21,175 cm<sup>2</sup> or 2.46 per cent of the total area of all the

editions. And this exceeds HIV/AIDS coverage by 0.05 per cent. Moreover, the weekly entertainment page which presents miscellaneous issues in Sunday editions covers a total area of 10,587.5 cm<sup>2</sup> or 1.23 percent. This exceeds the area covered by articles on HIV/AIDS by 0.68 per cent. Articles and non-news texts cover only 0.67 per cent of the total area.

HIV/AIDS news stories from different administrative regions of the country in the newspaper are not fairly distributed. Stories usually come from very limited areas. News from the capital, Addis Ababa, and foreign news from international agencies constitutes 45 per cent of the total of HIV/AIDS stories. Out of a total of 70 news stories on the topic there are only eight stories from Harari, Somali, Benshangul-Gumuz, and Gambela regions of Ethiopia together. No news story on HIV/AIDS appeared from the Afar region. This implies that the coverage of HIV/AIDS in *Addis Zemen* is biased towards the capital and other urban areas.

The news sources of the paper are also concentrated from two areas. The data gathered from the 35 editions of the newspaper indicate that out of 77 major sources referred and quoted in unclear news stories, 55 or 71.3 per cent of the sources are government offices, officials, Donors/NGOs and their representatives. Sources including professionals and scientists, religious authorities and celebrities appeared in 11.4 per cent of the stories. Ordinary people and PLWHA constitute 9 and 7.7 per cent of the sources respectively.

The figure shows that the paper is an instrument of top-down communication in which the powerful in government and non-government institutions speak to the people. By limiting its space given for the ordinary citizens and PLWHA it tends to



maintain the role of inactive audience in the people. The paper appears less interested in encouraging participatory or interactive communication. Even the column which is devoted to deal with the issue of HIV/AIDS, never interviewed an HIV positive person in the 35 sample editions of the paper.

Moreover, several news events made by ordinary people have been reported based on the word of authorities. This tendency leaves the main actors of significant social events in the background and brings up individuals who do not have direct role in the events. A news story of *Addis Zemen* on February 1, 2004 could be an example. A woman cyclist, who rode to the regional town of Asosa for an anti-AIDS campaign, made news. On her arrival in the town, she made a speech on HIV/AIDS for 20 thousand residents of the area. However, the source of the news story was the Head of the Regional HIV/AIDS, Prevention and Control Office. The actress and main player of the event remained in the background.

Besides this, the placement of news stories in the newspaper seems to indicate that HIV/AIDS news stories are marginalized. Out of 70 news stories, 61 or 87.1 percent were placed in the inside pages of the paper and in the weekly column which always appeared on the last page of the paper. Only eight news stories or 11.4 percent of the stories appeared on the front page. The reason behind the placement of the stories on the front page seems to be the value given to the sources of the stories rather than the content. The sources were high profile government officials.

The contents of the news stories also reflected the bias of the paper towards specific themes. Even though prevention could be taken as the basic solution to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS, other areas also need due attention. Since Ethiopia has

already had a population of more than 1.5 million PLWHA (MOH:2004:v) such themes as stigma and discrimination, positive living with HIV, care and support, ART, counseling and others should get adequate coverage. The theme that concerns PLWHA could also convey messages of prevention. However, the largest portion of the news on HIV/AIDS in *Addis Zemen* is devoted to prevention and VCT. That is 62.7 percent of the total number of the stories. The issue of stigma and discrimination appeared in five or 7.1 percent of the stories, while positive living with HIV has never been covered as a major issue. News stories that cover ART consist of only 2.8 percent of the total stories. Examining these figures in the context of the seriousness of HIV/AIDS as one of the critical problems of the country, it could be said that the coverage is far from being adequate. Other less serious issues such as arts, sports and entertainment have been provided with more than a three fold wider space than HIV/AIDS in the newspaper.

Moreover, the pattern of the coverage within the relatively marginal space appears to be biased towards elite sources. Ordinary citizens and PLWHA are marginalized. Particularly PLWHA seem to be affected in two ways: first, they lack significant presence as sources of news; second, the issue of positive living with HIV/AIDS has never appeared as major theme of stories.

Therefore, the characteristic feature of HIV/AIDS coverage in *Addis Zemen* could be taken as defective. One dimensional, top-down communication has dominated the flow of information in the newspaper. Though HIV/AIDS is an issue that concerns all members of the society, the paper reflects the ideas of authoritative sources. The voice of ordinary citizens and PLWHA has never been adequately

entertained. Interactive communication, which is believed to be effective in dealing with HIV/AIDS, is missing from the newspaper.

#### **4.4 HIV/AIDS coverage in *Medical***

*Medical* newspaper appears to be special in two ways: first, it focuses on health issues; second, its content is mainly derived from the Internet and other non-local sources. These particular features of the paper influence its coverage of HIV/AIDS. Since HIV/AIDS is primarily a health issue that affects many aspects of social life, the paper is not commonly expected to marginalize it. On the other hand, its dependence on the Internet and non-local materials appears to negatively affect the direct relevance of the stories and articles to the Ethiopian reader.

This study looks into 13 sample editions of the newspaper which are selected using systematic sampling method. The sample is derived from 52 weekly editions of one year by taking the first edition from every interval of four. It is one fourth or 25 per cent of the total population.

The data gathered from the sample editions of *Medical* indicate that HIV/AIDS is one of the issues regularly covered. In all the sample editions of the paper, 19 news stories, 10 articles, 17 letters and three editorials on HIV/AIDS were printed. In terms of space, out of 205, 504 cm<sup>2</sup> area of all the sample editions of the

paper, 10,190.4 cm<sup>2</sup> was devoted to HIV/AIDS material. News stories cover an area of 3,724.7 cm<sup>2</sup> - that is 1.8 per cent the total area. Of all 101 news stories in the sample, 19 or 18.81 per cent are on HIV/AIDS.

**Table 5- Theme of HIV/AIDS News Stories, Editorials, Articles, and Letters in 13 Sample Editions of *Medical Newspaper***

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Number of Stories and articles</b>	<b>In per cent</b>
<b>ART</b>	7	13.46
<b>Care and support</b>	0	0.00
<b>LWHA</b>	6	11.53
<b>OVC</b>	0	0.00
<b>Prevention</b>	11	21.15
<b>Scientific research</b>	12	23.07
<b>Stigma and discrimination</b>	1	1.92
<b>VCT</b>	4	7.69
<b>Others(search for pen pals)</b>	11	21.15
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>99.97</b>

Regarding the contents of news stories, articles, editorials and others, the theme which appears most frequently is medical research on HIV/AIDS. It was a theme for 23.07 per cent of the text in different topics. The least addressed theme is stigma and discrimination, which appeared only in 1.92 per cent of the texts. Where ART and VCT are concerned, each has been dealt in 13.43 and 7.69 per cent of the material respectively. Out of 52 items on HIV/AIDS, there were six letters sent to the paper by PLWHA.

**Table-6 Sources of HIV/AIDS News Stories, Articles,**

### **Editorials and Letters in *Medical News* paper**

Sources Nu	mber of appearances	In Per cent
<b>Government authorities</b>	3	5.45
<b>Ordinary people</b>	7	12.72
<b>Professionals</b>	24	43.63
<b>PLWHA</b>	10	18.18
<b>Scientist</b>	11	20.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>99.98</b>

The interest of the newspaper to scientific research concerning HIV/AIDS appears to make it biased towards professional and scientist sources. This group constitutes 67.3 per cent of all sources on HIV/AIDS issues in the newspaper. Out of 52 items on the issue, PLWHA are sources for ten items, which constitute 19.23 per cent. All text materials that have PLWHA as sources are letters from readers.

However, most of the stories of the paper are not local. Out of 19 HIV/AIDS news stories that appeared in the 13 sample editions of *Medical* newspaper, only two are local. The rest are foreign stories taken from the Internet and other non-local sources.

## **4.5 Implications of the data for HIV/AIDS coverage in**

### ***Medical***

All the issues of *Medical* which are included in the sample for this study carried various text materials on HIV/AIDS. Except for a single issue, all had news stories on the subject. Articles and letters from readers are the common items that appear on the topic. The editorials of three issues focused on HIV/AIDS prevention,

ART and VCT. Three editorials in 13 issues of the newspaper constitute 23 percent. This seems to indicate that *Medical* is concerned about the pandemic.

The paper's endeavour to attract the participation of readers including PLWHA deserves appreciation. The involvement of audience in contributing ideas to any media is regarded positively, because it promotes two way communication or dialogue which helps in facilitating better understanding of problems. The paper has two permanent spaces that entertain two types of letters from its readers. The one is for any reader who has challenging questions on HIV/AIDS and the paper provides answers. The other one is exclusively for readers who search for pen pals and marriage partners. It is indicated under the banner of the column that readers, who seek to exchange ideas about HIV/AIDS with pen pals and PLWHA in search of marriage are encouraged. The paper prints two letters in every issue in this place.

However, any reader who seeks pen pals and a marriage partner has to cut out a form printed in the column to send a letter to the newspaper. The form specifies that any writer indicates his/her name, sex, physical appearance, educational status, occupation, religion, HIV status, interests and hobbies. It also stresses that only PLWHA are entertained to seek marriage partners through the paper.

Other indicators of the patterns of HIV/AIDS communication in *Medical* include the type of sources of news and information. The data gathered from the 13 sample editions of *Medical* show that the newspaper reflects dominantly the ideas and interests of professionals and scientists. Most of the time it dwells on sensational science laboratory news stories which focus on beauty, sex, reproductive health,

genetic engineering and unusual natural occurrences. It hardly reflects the primary health interests of the Ethiopian reader.

Though the space devoted to readers' letters appears to be an opportunity to give a local slant for the newspaper which excessively use foreign materials, the constricted purpose of the letters' columns that prevent readers from reflecting on broader social issues including HIV/AIDS, appears to deny the newspaper a more significant role in HIV/AIDS communication. The will of the newspaper to promote exchange of ideas among pen pals appears to fail in extending itself to transform some of the interpersonal communication of pals to its pages that benefit a larger body of the community by creating dialogue within the readership. The role that *Medical* assumes in facilitating the coming together of any of its readers with a pen pal and/or a marriage partner through a letter written on a form that is cut from a copy of the newspaper seems to be commercially motivated rather than addressing the genuine or the most pressing needs of the audience.

## 4.6 Background of *Libona* newspaper

### 4.6.1 DHEA as Indigenous Community Organization

DHEA regards itself as Ethiopia's major association of PLWHA. A pamphlet introducing the association indicates that DHEA was established in 1998 and has currently over 12,000 members in its eleven branches in five of nine regional states of the country. The association has a clearly set organizational structure, voluntary membership principles, vision, mission, objectives and a set of activities. DHEA is a non-profit, non-governmental, indigenous membership organization (DHEA, Undated: 1-10). The association is committed to,

*Addressing the prevention of HIV/AIDS and the protection of the basic needs and human rights of people living with HIV/AIDS, their families and dependents through advocacy, counseling, care and education (ibid, Undated: 2).*

My informant, the founder and current president of DHEA, Tadesse Aynalem, emphasizes the association and its male and female members as pioneers heroes and heroines who were the first to break the silence about HIV/AIDS in this country by declaring in public that they were HIV positive. He believes that the association has become the strength of the weak and the voice of the voiceless. He says,

*DHEA has been the source of courage, confidence and hope to its members. It has transformed its stigmatized, discriminated and marginalized members into fearless, active citizens, who fight HIV/AIDS and human rights violation.*

The president, in an interview he gave to the newspaper of the association, *Libona* (Nov, 2004) said that the challenge PLWHA still facing was stigma and discrimination. According to him many PLWHA do not have the courage to come to the association, because of stigma and discrimination. Most of the members volunteered for membership, partly because they were needy and sought material support from DHEA. Because of the absence of trained and educated members, the association was forced to employ non-members to run its activities. According to the president, most of the members came from the lower strata of the society. Now the association is trying to attract associate members regardless of their HIV status.



According to the above cited DHEA publication (Undated: 2) the organizational structure of the association emphasizes leadership role in the President while it leaves the management to the Executive Director.

*A representative assembly of members is the highest decision-making body, with a national executive committee and president concerned members' affairs and an executive at the head office, responsible for the professional operations (DHEA, Undated: 2).*

#### **4.6.2 Significance of HIV/AIDS communication in DHEA**

In interviews of PLWHA that appeared in various editions of *Libona* there are several factors that attract members to the association. Members believe that DHEA has created an environment in which people with similar needs and attitudes discuss their own problems freely and share experiences. Members who were interviewed by the newspaper indicated that the association contributed a lot in shaping their spirit to positive way of thinking. Many members, who wrote about themselves in the newspaper, believe that the major benefit they get from the association is internal strength. They say it was DHEA that enabled them to live peacefully with HIV. Almost in all the personal testimonies written in *Libona*, the writers say that in DHEA they stopped thinking about death and started to think about life.

Another factor that is said to attract PLWHA to the association is counseling service. Many HIV positive people decide to volunteer for membership after getting counseling service in DHEA. Exchange of ideas in formal or informal ways about HIV/AIDS among members is an important source of information. According to the president of the association, exchange of ideas among members is a way of articulating needs.

On the other hand, provision of care and support for PLWHA, AIDS patients, orphans and possibility of employment within the association are the most important economic factors that draw members from the poorest section of the society to DHEA. The areas of employment include home based care service for bed ridden AIDS patients.

Those members who may not be able to share one of the above benefits can hope to get loans to start micro businesses. Helping members to be self-supporting through loans is one of the focus areas of the association. Training opportunities are also available for those who are successful to get either employment or loan. Awareness raising trainings on HIV/AIDS are always synchronized with other trainings. In its activities the association stresses the following,

- *[P]eople living with HIV/AIDS are best represented and supported by other PLWHA;*
- *Promoting the involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS at all levels;*
- *Building the capacity of members, engaging them in most (peer) association activities;*
- *Ensuring efficiency, accountability and transparency;*
- *Focus on gender issues as one of the root causes of HIV/AIDS* (ibid: 5).

Furthermore, participation in any public event as a person living with HIV/AIDS involves financial rewards. If a member presents his/her personal experience or testimony as HIV positive in an organized public gathering he/she would get some 150 birr (1 USD = 8.60 birr). Contributing an article on related issues for the monthly *Libona* newspaper is encouraged by the same amount of payment. Though it is an occasional and rare opportunity, willingness to get photographed for a poster as HIV positive, rewards a member with more than two thousand birr.

According to Sileshi Be tele, the Executive Director of the association, until last year's decision of the Ethiopian government to provide any medically eligible HIV positive person with free ART, the hope of getting free or low priced ART was one of the major factors that pulled members and non-members to DHEA.

The advocacy role of DHEA for the human rights of PLWHA in general is highly valued by its members. The association officially condemns any ill-treatment, stigma and discrimination that are committed against PLWHA. According to my informant DHEA has exploited any forum to fight for the improvement of the life of its members in particular and PLWHA in general.

According to Tadesse, the president of DHEA, the voluntary membership principle of the association requires any member to embrace the ideal of DHEA which is expressed by the motto "*Let adversities end with us, and generation be saved*". Tadesse says the principle entails responsibility on each member to stop the spread of HIV and fight against AIDS, stigma and discrimination. Members are encouraged to participate in anti HIV/AIDS communication.

According to the Executive Director of the association, DHEA uses different types of media such as posters, photo exhibitions, songs and dramas, public speech forums, and films in order to accomplish its mission of awareness creation and advocacy. The launching of *Libona* (means the psyche or mind in the official Ethiopian language, Amharic) in September 2003 as an organ of the association reflects the growing communication needs of DHEA.

My informant, Sileshi says all the content of the association media products reflect the interests of DHEA and its members. Members participate in passing

messages. Several posters published by DHEA carry photographs and words of the members. In occasions such as World AIDS Day and others, members are invited to present their own poems, dramas and songs to the public.

All the media products are distributed and presented to members and non-members freely through the branch offices of DHEA. Most of the publications, media products and other projects of the association are funded by various non-governmental organizations such as Action Aid Ethiopia, Christian Relief and Development Association (CRDA), Norwegian Church AID (NCA), the government body for HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office (HAPCO), and others.

## **4.7 *Libona* as an alternative news paper**

### **4.7.1 HIV/AIDS communication in *Libona***

As it is indicated in the third chapter of this study the initial points that are taken to verify *Libona* as an alternative newspaper include the following:

1. It is devoted to promote the interests of a community of PLWHA.
2. It is freely distributed among members of the association and reaches others.
3. News, articles, poems and others materials of the paper are contributions of members.
4. The cost of its production and distribution is covered by a humanitarian organization, so it is free from market forces that influence content.

These primary features, as it is indicated earlier, fit with the definition given to alternative newspapers by Masilela (1996:107) that the newspapers are run by those “groups who feel that their view points and concerns are not sufficiently

represented within existing local or national media". Non-commercialism, partisanship, focusing on particular social movements are essential elements of alternative newspapers that could also be understood from the above four characteristic features of *Libona*.

However, identifying the features that make the newspaper alternative is not the final goal of this study. Since all alternative newspapers do not necessarily guarantee effective communication that promote better understanding of such serious social issue as HIV/AIDS among the community, it would be a necessary task to look into elements of participatory communication in the newspaper and qualities that overcome the limitations of the mainstream media. As it is stressed by Masilela, Servaes, Freire and other proponents of participatory communication, participation of non-professionals and/or ordinary members of the community is the major factor that determines the effectiveness of the media. It is the prevalence of horizontal and bottom-up communication that results from the participation of community members. This pattern of communication provides opportunity to dialogue and redefine "the relation between the informer and the informed" (Masilela, 1996:107).

Hence the following part of this paper endeavours to locate examples of participatory communication in *Libona*. This 12 page tabloid size newspaper which has been fully supported by Norwegian Church Aid has never had a written additional policy that governs its form and content. However, according to the executive director of the association, who is also the editor-in-chief of the newspaper, *Libona* is guided by the principles that lead DHEA. Hence the reference points in this study include the

content of this monthly newspaper and the publication of the association that presents the vision, mission and objectives of DHEA.

The sample editions of the paper that are looked here include all 12 edition months of one year from September 2004 to August 2005 (the first and last months of Ethiopian calendar respectively). But during the 12 months, only ten editions appeared. According to the editor-in-chief of the paper, the publication of *Libona* was interrupted because of delays in releasing the fund on the part of the donor organization in the first two months of 2005.

*Libona* has an apparent feature of mainstream newspaper in its layout and design. The first page is exclusively devoted to news and the placement of stories seems to follow the tradition of conventional papers where the best story of the edition is printed at the top left side of the page. Editorial takes the left side of the second page. On the top of the editorial, names of the editor-in-chief and its deputy is indicated. It is also noted that “*Libona*- a monthly newspaper that is published by DHEA in cooperation with the Norwegian Church Aid focuses on HIV/AIDS and related matters of social life.” This procedure, which includes the indication of the names and addresses of the editors, appears to comply with the requirements of the press law of the country. The format of inside pages also reflects the conventional style.

The content of the paper clearly assert the interest of the association, and its activities. News stories, editorials, articles, letters to the editors and other text materials of the paper appear to provide explanations for the stated duties and

practices of DHEA. As it is indicated in the promotional publication of the association, it is

*Engaged in a nation wide HIV and AIDS prevention and control program, which includes awareness creation, counseling, care and support, information, education and communication (IEC) and advocacy, facilitation of anti-retroviral treatment, income generation activities (IGA) programs, fund raising and institutional capacity building (DHEA, undated: 1).*

The paper prints news stories regarding the activities of the association in all its branches. Members in the branches act as news reporters. The editorial column focuses on contents such as mobilizing members, advocacy, the social responsibility of DHEA, and poverty issues. Letters to the editors' column prints the messages of member and non-member readers. In ten editions of the paper 25 letters of readers were entertained. The content of the letters include comments, questions, and complaints on the association. In the interview page, PLWHA talk about themselves. If non-members, regardless of their HIV status, are interviewed in this page the contents of the discussion would reflect the interest of PLWHA. A full-page column by the title "Life" is also dedicated to members to write about themselves with their own language. The contents of this page cover the experience of the writers as HIV positive. Other columns on women, arts, opinions and general information are prepared by the contribution of members. Though many of the contributors are less educated, they write poems, short stories, articles and also ask questions to be printed on letters to the editors' corner. All the contents of the newspaper is devoted to HIV/AIDS, PLWHA, the activities and needs of the association and related issues.

The ten issues of *Libona* printed 44 news stories focusing on advocacy, care and support, stigma and discrimination, IEC activities of PLWHA, training for members and others. Of all news stories 11 or 25 percent consist of the coverage of IEC activities of DHEA through members. This appears to indicate that the major engagement of the association is directly linked with awareness creation among the public. News stories on donation from individuals and societies to DHEA constitute 18.4 percent of the total stories. One of the frequently covered issues, training of PLHA constitutes 11.35 percent of the stories.

In ten editions of the newspaper of the year, nine interviews and four profiles were presented to readers. Among the nine interviewees, eight were HIV positive members of the association. Seven were women with different social backgrounds. Some of them are employees of the association as home-based care workers and sanitarians. The other two interviewees include the president of DHEA and a professional on VCT.

**Table 6 – Content Categories of All News Stories in Nine Editions of *Libona***

	<b>News categories</b>	<b>Number of news stories</b>
1	Advocacy (DHEA demands and oppositions)	3
2	Care and support for PLWHA	2
3	Condemning cases of stigma and discrimination	2
4	Government authorities and celebrities with DHEA	3
5	IEC activities (awareness creation among the public)	11
6	Loan for PLWHA and income generating activities	3
7	Organizational activities (opening branches, services)	5
8	Receiving aid from individual donors and societies	8
9	Training for PLWHA	5
10	Others	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>



#### **4.7.2 News Value in *Libona***

In *Libona* newspaper news value appears to be judged based on the interest of PLWHA in general and the members of the association in particular. Most of the news stories that appeared in the front page of the paper may not be acceptable even to the most marginal space in mainstream newspapers (see Appendix-2). Small local activities of PLWHA that do not always attract the attention of big papers constitute the regular items of news in the paper. The values of the association that are expressed in its vision, mission and objectives seem to govern news decision-making. An event related with the success of the association and PLWHA makes the best news that deserves the top left side of the front page. Any event that affects the interest of the members will be treated as important news, but the reaction of the association leads.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

The media in DHEA serve the interest of PLWHA as a community. The pattern of communication includes the direction of messages from members to members, from members or the association to the general public, the government, and aid agencies. Horizontal and bottom-up communication patterns are reflected.

The emergence of various media in DHEA could also be seen as a response to the one-way, top-down dominant communication pattern. No one of the writers in *Libona* newspaper could have the opportunity to write on other newspaper, as they have no attractive skill to the commercial media. Yet *Libona* empowered them to have roles as communicators. Participation enabled them to have voice and define themselves in their own ways.

All the stories and profiles written by less educated women represent an important element in *Libona* newspaper that signifies a look into life from the perspective of the poor and the marginalized (See Appendix-1). It could also be seen as an opportunity, in which people from the lower strata of the society, could have voice in the alternative media.

For the members of DHEA the question of HIV/AIDS is inseparably linked with poverty. Though the essence of membership is related with being HIV positive, poverty is the major factor that gathers members to the association. Therefore, participatory communication, in the case of DHEA emanates from the urge to survive.

Subjectivity is also another important element in the process of communication. PLWHA, who expose themselves in public without fear of stigma and discrimination, are regarded as heroes and heroines. They address members of their community and others to fight stigma and discrimination. They try to influence the HIV/AIDS communication patterns in ways that favour their advantage.

The process of communication signifies their transfer from being 'victims of HIV' into heroes and heroines, from passive onlookers into active participants. The possession of de commodified media under DHEA results in the empowerment of the member.

The members also assume the role of saving the generation by holding a motto "*Let adversities end with us, generation be saved*". This, I think signifies a process that involves ideology construction in favour of the grass-root and marginalized community. However, like any of the alternative media, DHEA's newspaper or other

media products are not self-sustaining. They are supported by external funds. Their fate is linked with the will of donors.

## Chapter Five

### 5.1 Integrated conclusion

The survival of the human society could hardly be conceived without communication. Mutual understandings among human beings as well as knowledge about the natural and social realities are facilitated only through exchange of ideas and information. As the members of the society who take part in social interactions, human beings are endowed with the urge to self-expression. For them communication is a natural and social necessity. "Men as beings cannot be truly human apart from communication, for they are communicative creatures" (Freire, 1972:99).

Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts that,

*Every one has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.*

Scholars at different times also stressed the relevance of this idea. However communication has never been free from reflecting the realities that empower portions of the society over the other. Access to the means of communication presupposes economic, political and literacy power. Hence this condition divided the

society into speakers and listeners. This created a dominant pattern of communication which is characterized by top- down flow of information.

Though the media have the potential to positively transform the society, their operation under the control of the powerful and /or market mechanisms hampers them from addressing the real needs of the society. The doubt concerning the role of the mainstream media as genuine instrument of communication appears justifiable. The mainstream media dominantly reflect the perspectives of the powerful and the elite. The wider section of the society and the poor do hardly access the media as means of exercising freedom of opinion and expression.

The cases of *Addis Zemen* and *Medical* confirm that these newspapers are not free from the common shortcomings of the mainstream media. The space that both papers allocated to HIV/AIDS hardly indicates that the pandemic is one of the top critical problems of the country. Entertainment and other less important issues take a wider space than that of HIV/AIDS.

The relatively marginal space that these papers devoted to the issue does not appear to be effectively utilized. The coverage suffers from several defects. Both papers are biased towards elitist sources. They present the issue from the perspectives of authorities. This may reflect the news culture of the mainstream media which highly values prominence of persons who are quoted in news stories. However it could not give the whole picture of the reality. Since HIV/AIDS is a major problem that concerns each and every member of the society, the ideas of ordinary citizens needs to be entertained. It is the absence or inadequacy of view points from below that gives defective communication structure for the newspapers.

Their coverage of the issue tends to maintain the division between the informer and the informed.

Both papers appear to undermine the significance of the opinions of PLWHA. It seems that they have not paid due attention to produce informative and educative human interest stories and features based on the experience of HIV positive men and women.

Bias towards urban areas is also a major short coming for both papers. Rural areas are not fairly covered. *Medical* has a very serious problem in this regard. Local HIV/AIDS news stories are nearly absent in the paper. Stories taken from foreign sources are its major items. This may be related with lack of resources to produce local materials both from the capital and regions. However for *Medical*, which has an editor-in-chief, two deputies and an advisor with doctor's title each, it appears unlikely to practice a kind of copy-paste health journalism. Hospitals and local researchers could be valuable resources for a newspaper like *Medical*. But the papers effort in the coverage of HIV/AIDS issue is insignificant.

Other than *Addis Zemen* and *Medical*, *Libona* represents a different area of press. The paper's exclusive focus on HIV/AIDS is not the major element that typifies its essence. It is the prevalence in the paper of the structure of communication which is characterized by horizontal and bottom-up flow of information, which represents its identity. This is the core element that is missing in the two mainstream newspapers.

*Libona*, by devoting itself to entertain the ideas and opinions of HIV positive men and women, undertakes a role of empowering a marginalized group of the

society. Its coverage for the activities of PLWHA in DHEA provides opportunity to the members of the association to reflect on their practice. This could be taken as an element of communication that embodies cognitive value of the paper.

However the merit of *Libona* as an alternative newspaper is confined to the community it represents. It reaches to a limited number of audience and has a less significant impact on a wider section of the society.

Like most of the alternative newspapers its dependence on the financial support of donors affects its sustainability. Its survival rests on external funding. The participation of DHEA members in contributing articles and cooperating for interviews on personal life, depends on the payment allocated to participants. If donors withdraw the fund for the payment to contributors participatory communication may come to an end.

The characteristic of the main sources of *Addis Zemen* and *Libona* could be taken as indication of their commitment to several particular interests. The major sources of *Addis Zemen*, government offices and officials, imply that the paper serves to promote the policies of the government. Similarly *Libona* reflects the interests of its owner, DHEA, and its members.

Thematically *Addis Zemen* tends to prevention while *Libona* focuses on activities of PLWHA which include IEC project implementation activities of to prevent the pandemic. Clearly manifested advocacy and partisanship appears to differentiate *Libona* from the other two newspapers. This characteristic is highlighted in the editorials of the paper. Stories on DHEA, urging the government to issue laws

that protect the human rights of PLWHA and provide ART, appeared in various editions of the paper.

## **5.2 Recommendation**

The mainstream newspapers, *Addis Zemen* and *Medical* can improve their HIV/AIDS coverage by re-examining their performance and identifying weaknesses that obstruct effective communication. They should enhance the quantity and quality of their HIV/AIDS coverage to adequately respond to the crisis caused by the pandemic. In order to execute their role of educating readers on the issue, they have to broaden their horizons and devote more space to deal with different aspects of the crisis.

Since HIV/AIDS is the concern of every member of the society it would be highly informative to add personalized features and stories on the issue. Readers can learn more from featured experiences of ordinary people. Stories about meetings, authoritative decisions and scientific facts should be supplemented by human interest stories. Diversifying news sources and including perspective of ordinary members of the society is among the solutions. Adding analysis and feature stories on HIV/AIDS can improve the quality of the coverage. Qualitative changes that are related with the inclusion of new genres can expand the area devoted to the issue.

Localizing news stories and articles on HIV/AIDS appears to be a major necessity to *Medical* newspaper, to serve the actual needs of the society. This may require assigning reporters to hospitals and research centers, and other related areas.

But the result can be rewarding by up grading the quality of the paper and expanding its readership.

The alternative newspaper, *Libona* can take several measures to make up for its actual and potential shortcomings. Though participatory communication is practiced in the newspaper its dependence on financial rewards appears to be a critical problem. The paper and/or the association should work towards encouraging free participatory communication. Since the tasks of the association include income generating activities, DHEA should think to support its own paper in the long run.

## **Appendix- A**

### **PLWHA write their own stories on *Libona* newspaper**

#### **1. Bizuayehu Alemu**

(October 2004)

She is a 30 years old woman living with HIV/AIDS. She tells how poverty and ignorance led her to be exposed to HIV/AIDS. She condemns the irresponsibility and immorality of a man who approached her as a single person while he had a wife and three children. When she got pregnant, he forced her to abort and abandoned her. Though, next time she secured marriage and a baby with another man, HIV affected her family life. Her success story was that she was able to get HIV negative baby.

#### **2. Fasika Lema**



(November 2004)

The theme of her story is that carelessness of parents affects the life of children. She is a 29 years old woman living with HIV/AIDS. She has an eight years old positive daughter. Her husband, who was a soldier, passed away because of AIDS. She blames both her husband and herself for their child being born HIV positive. She also tells how, being employed as a sanitary worker in DHEA, managed to live with virus.

### **3. Bethelihem Ashebir**

(December 2004)

In the story she focuses how she managed to have HIV negative baby. She tells that she was one of those women who got free medical treatment that prevents the transmission of HIV from mother to child. She emphasizes how it is difficult for an HIV positive woman to be a mother of HIV negative baby.

### **4. Mulu Tadesse**

(December 2004)

She was born in a rural area in northern Ethiopia. She does not exactly know how she old is. But she thinks that she is above 35. She blames herself for all that happened to her. Her husband left her and their HIV positive daughter after knowing that he was HIV negative. She says the first stigma and discrimination she faced was from her own husband. She also tells how she managed to live with the virus. “It is after I knew my HIV status that I learned to read and writes”, she says.

## **Appendix- B**

Headlines of Front Page News Stories in Ten editions of *Libona*

### **August – September 2004**

1. Material and Financial Aid Distributed to Members
2. DHEA Opens New Branch at Babile
3. College Students Donate Birr 1017 to AIDS Orphans
4. Members Conduct AIDS Awareness Meetings in Eastern Ethiopia

### **October 2004**

1. DHEA to produce Four Video Films in Four Languages
2. Factory Fires a Worker for being HIV/ Positive
3. ENAPA Urges for More ARV Supply
4. I Fight Stigma and Discrimination: Ema Thompson
5. Peter Piot and Recharad Fetchem Talk With DHEA Leaders

### **November 2005**

1. DHEA President Demands Enactment of New Laws to Protect PLWHA's Human Rights
2. President Demands the Expansion of ARV Supply
3. World AIDS Day Commemorated
4. "Don't Give up to AIDS" - British Ambassador Bob Dewar
5. Resource Center to be Established
6. DHAE Nazareth Branch Grants Loan to 55 Members

### **December 2005**

1. The Hero Passes Away

The Death of the First President of DHEA Never Discourage Us. We Continue Fighting AIDS: DHEA President Tadesse Aynalem

### **March 2005**

1. DHEA Women Make Anti- HIV/ AIDS Agitation in Arsi and Bale
2. DHEA Nazareth Branch Undertakes 180 Thousand Birr Worth Income Generating Project

### **April 2005**

1. Tricycles Worth of 137, 600 Birr Distributed to Branches to Improve Home-Based Care Service.
2. I Commend DHEA Anti-Harmful Practice Film: Vice President of Amhara Regional State
3. Two DHEA Anti-HIV/AIDS Films Presented to Residents of Nazareth Town --  
- Anti - HIV/AIDS Mobile Agitation on Progress

### **May 2005**

1. DHCA Annual General conference 5th Regular Meeting Takes Place  
- Meeting expressed concern for the delay of ART provision of government
2. DHEA Opens Resources Centre
3. DHEA Provides 150 Women with Vocational and Anti- HIV/AIDS Training

### **June 2005**

1. DHEA Basket Ball Team won 2005 2nd Division championship
2. DHEA Trains Counseling Service Personnel
3. School, Kindergarten Donate Money and Garment to DHEA

4. Widow Donate Money Intended to Commemorate Feast of Her Dead Husband

### **July 2005**

1. Stigma and Discrimination in Family Causing Early Death to AIDS patients: DHEA Home-Based Care Service Women
2. Shashemene Branch DHEA Receives Aid  
-Conducts Anti- AIDS Agitation.
3. Addis Ababa Branch DHEA Opens Exhibitions

### **August 2005**

1. Lets Build Consensus to Strengthen DHEA in The New Year:  
DHEA Resident
2. DHEA to Open New Jobs for Members with An Outlay of 300 Thousand Birr
3. Attitude Change is a Condition to Fight Stigma and Discrimination: An expert

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