

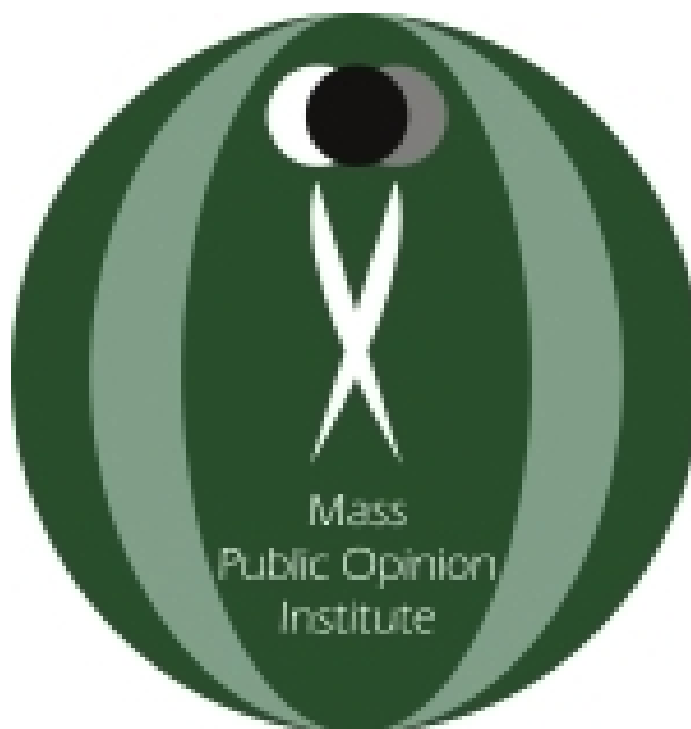


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EDITORIAL COMMENT

The MPOI Bulletin is a bi-annual publication of the Mass Public Opinion Institute. In the bulletin we try to summarize major findings of any research activities undertaken within the period under review. In this issue of the bulletin we present abridged reports of findings of national surveys on **Children Living on the Streets**, the **Parliament of Zimbabwe**, **The State of the Media in Zimbabwe** and an Afrobarometer survey on **The State of Democracy in Zimbabwe**.

MPOI continues to face challenges like any other Non-Governmental Organization. The threat of the NGO Bill that was gazetted in August is one of the challenges. If signed into law the Bill threatens the existence of many non-governmental organizations. As such, MPOI shares the same view with the National Association of Non-governmental Organizations (NANGO) that the Bill is unacceptable and that it is inimical to the achievement of democratic freedoms and liberties, development and poverty alleviation in Zimbabwe.

We want to take this opportunity to bid farewell to Professor Gordon Chavhunduka who will be leaving the Institute at the end of the year. Professor Chavhunduka has guided the Institute through a very critical transition after the untimely death of Professor Masipula Sithole. We will also take the same opportunity to welcome Mr. Eldred Masunungure who will be joining the Institute in January 2005 to take over from Professor Chavhunduka.

The Institute also bids farewell to Mr. Thulani Sithole who is emigrating to South Africa with his family. Mr. Sithole has been a key member of the research team and his expertise will be missed in the department. We wish both Professor Chavhunduka and Thulani all the success in their future endeavors.

Charles Mangongera
Principal Researcher





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MPOI

About Us

The Mass Public Opinion Institute (MPOI) is an organization established and registered as a research Trust to undertake, publish, and discuss research on political, economic and social issues that impact on development. MPOI aims to gauge public opinion on topical issues of governance and public concern, and make this known to policy makers, implementers, and the public itself. These could be political, social, and economic issues that affect Zimbabweans. It is hoped that by constantly asking citizens to express their views on pertinent issues of concern the “culture of fear” and disengagement will progressively decline.

Mission

The Mission of MPOI is to offer policy makers, civil society organizations, embassies, legislators, strategic partners and the general public, non-partisan, quantitative information on public opinion. It promotes freedom of expression as a means of enhancing the quality of democracy and good governance in Zimbabwe.

Vision

The Institute is inspired by the vision that “good governance” prospers where policy makers are informed by public opinion, and that a “culture of fear” and disengagement is eroded when citizens are constantly asked to express their views on issues of concern to them.

“Could it be that public opinion is the “missing link” in the democracy debate in Zimbabwe, and indeed in Africa, today?”



FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

It is not easy to take over a position and try to get into the big shoes of two academic luminaries, the late founder of MPOI, Prof. Masipula Sithole and his successor, Prof. Gordon Chavunduka. MPOI owes its birth from Masipula's vision about the invaluable place of public opinion in the policy universe and the need to systematically and continuously capture this. Prof. Chavunduka ably sustained this vision. It was therefore with apprehension that I accepted the baton in January 2005.

One of the mandates of MPOI is to make our activities as a non-governmental research Institute publicly known with a view to not only disseminate our research findings but also to provoke public debate about the problems, challenges and opportunities that face our presently troubled country. The MPOI Bulletin is one way of connecting the Institute to its public clientele and interfacing with our key stakeholders including policy makers, analysts, civil society activists, investors, donors and scholars.

Another medium for this is our website that we can happily announce is now fully operational and will be updated on a continuous basis. We welcome and indeed encourage feedback from you on any aspect of our work as reflected in this Bulletin and other MPOI activities. To this extent and with your support, we hope to introduce a Readers Forum in the next issue of the MPOI Bulletin. I am a firm believer in the adage that "to speak is human but to speak up is a mark of citizenship". MPOI invites you to be part of the critical mass of Zimbabwe's citizens who speak up?



SUMMARIES OF SURVEYS

SURVEY ON PARLIAMENT — MARCH 2004

Executive Summary

The main motivation for undertaking this survey was to gauge the perceptions of the public concerning the institution of parliament and the public assessment of our MPs after four years of being elected into office in 2000. A number of questions ranging from peoples' familiarity with parliament, the purpose of the parliament, its performance and a few on voting behavior were asked.

The survey involved 1200 questionnaires that were administered in 20 randomly selected constituencies. The number of constituencies selected per province for this survey was sorely determined by the allocation of constituencies per province, which is done by the Delimitation Commission preceding every parliamentary election. 69% of the respondents were drawn from the rural areas and 31% were from the urban areas. Of these respondents, 53% were female and 47% were males.

On Voting and Elections

Zimbabweans consider elections as important with up to nine in every ten having set their minds to participate in the forthcoming parliamentary

election in 2005. The burning desires to vote runs across the age and residential area divide.

- ✿ 83% said they voted in the 2000 parliamentary election and 17% did not for reasons that the survey did not probe on. The first statistic is clearly overstated as the declared official turnout was far below this.
- ✿ Five in every ten respondents voted along party lines while three in ten said they considered the caliber of the candidate.
- ✿ The fact that half the voters voted along party lines explains the reason why majority of seven in every ten do not support a constitutional amendment that would allow an MP to cross the floor and still retain the seat in Parliament.
- ✿ The caliber of the candidate directly links with the qualifications that people expect of MPs. They should be educated and have a political orientation as well.
- ✿ 53% are against the idea that Parliamentary and Presidential elections should be held concurrently.



On Knowledge of Parliament, MPs and Other Related Issues

- ⌘ A significant minority of respondents did not know what was meant by parliament. 17% have no idea of what parliament is.
- ⌘ 12% of those interviewed could not quite figure out how the role of an MP, let alone the parliament can relate to development and governance of the country.
- ⌘ 35% said that MPs “never” organize meetings with people of their constituency, while 31% said they do so “infrequently”.
- ⌘ Seven in every ten adult Zimbabweans are not aware of Parliamentary public hearings. Of those who are aware, only 7% attended such hearings.
- ⌘ The constituency-based parliamentary representation system (i.e. ‘first past the post’) is rated the best with 77% saying so. Worrying to note is the majority who do not know where Parliamentary Constituency Information Centers (PCICs) are located.

On performance of Parliament and MPs

- ⌘ The electorate are evenly split between those happy and those unhappy with the performance of MPs 29% and 9% are ‘dissatisfied’ and ‘very dissatisfied’ respectively, while 30% are ‘satisfied’ and only 6% ‘very satisfied’.
- ⌘ Evaluating the performance of the parliament, different results are reflected as compared to individual MPs. People are

generally satisfied with performance of Parliament, with 41% saying they were “Satisfied” and 5% “Very satisfied”.

- ⌘ While the majority is frustrated by the way MPs perform, 72% said they are not aware of the process they should follow to get rid of an ineffective MP.

Most important issues for the next Parliament

People expressed that the Parliament should look into a number of issues, which are:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| ⌘ Proper management of the economy | 18% |
| ⌘ Better health services | 14% |
| ⌘ Job creation | 12% |
| ⌘ Road construction and better transport network | 12% |
| ⌘ Provision of education facilities | 10% |
| ⌘ Food security | 6% |
| ⌘ Rural electrification | 5% |

Except for the “Don’t know” and “Nothing”, responses there are some issues that were cited which did not have a strong showing but carried an equally high degree of emotion and emphasis. These included the controversial land reform program, increasing cases of corruption and accommodation woes.



PUBLIC OPINION AND THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY IN ZIMBABWE, 2004

Major Findings

The Afrobarometer is an independent, non-partisan collaborative enterprise of Michigan State University (MSU), The Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) and the Centre for Democratic Development (CDD Ghana). Their publications report on the results of national sample surveys on the attitudes of citizens in selected African countries towards democracy, markets, civil society, and other aspects of development.

Based on a national sample conducted as part of Afrobarometer round 2, this report probes the public mood in Zimbabwe in mid-2004. It documents changes in public opinion since 1999 and compares Zimbabwe to other African countries. Mass attitudes are measured in the context of a country that has encountered severe economic and political crises during the past five years.

The Afrobarometer survey finds that:

On the economy:

- ⌘ Zimbabweans feel economically deprived: more than half of all adults think that current living conditions are bad; and present generations think they are materially worse off than their parents.
- ⌘ Four in ten Zimbabweans report that they went without food “many times” in the previous year. Rates of persistent hunger

are higher than in any other country surveyed.

- ⌘ More than other Africans, Zimbabweans are prone to hold government accountable for individual welfare. The most important popular priorities for government action are the management of the economy, unemployment, and food security.
- ⌘ Zimbabweans rarely mention land reform as a priority national problem; three quarters think that land acquisition should only be done by legal means and with compensation to owners.
- ⌘ Citizens give the government higher marks for combating AIDS than for creating jobs, keeping prices stable, or closing the gap between rich and poor. But the proportion is rising of those reporting they know someone who has died from AIDS.

On politics:

- ⌘ Zimbabweans are losing faith in democracy. Expressed support for this form of government is down from two-thirds of citizens in 1999 to less than one half in 2004.
- ⌘ If rejection of authoritarian alternatives is included, then deep commitments to democracy are down still further. Increasing numbers acquiesce to the idea of single-party rule.



- ⌘ At the same time, political parties have not fully penetrated society; one half of all Zimbabweans prefer to remain unaligned with either ZANU-PF or MDC. Part of the reason is that three out of four think that party competition leads to social conflict.
- ⌘ By a margin of more than five to one, Zimbabweans overwhelmingly reject political violence. Whereas MDC supporters are more likely to support violence in support of a just cause, ZANU-PF partisans are more likely to have actually engaged in violent political acts.
- ⌘ Fewer than half say they trust Robert Mugabe and the ruling party. While hardly a strong endorsement of presidential popularity, these figures have risen since 1999. And they far exceed the small proportions that are willing to admit trusting Morgan Tsvangirai and opposition parties.

Explaining Mass Attitudes

Public opinion in Zimbabwe is therefore a paradox. While the economy has shrunk and hunger has become widespread, political support for the incumbent has apparently increased. The report ends by offering an explanation of this puzzle.

- ⌘ First, some people – like party loyalists, military forces, and resettled peasant farmers – have benefited from ZANU-PF patronage. They not only regard the

economy as having turned up in the past year, but they credit the president with improvements in their own economic conditions.

- ⌘ Second, other people – especially the younger generation and rural dwellers – are afraid to express their true political preferences. Self-censorship is evident among those who think that the survey was sponsored by a government agency. They say they approve of the president when, in fact, they may not.
- ⌘ Third, the most important factor is political propaganda. Since 2000, the government has mounted a comprehensive campaign to revive the nationalist fervor of the liberation war. People who trust the ideological pronouncements of the official government media are very much more likely to give the president a positive rating.
- ⌘ Finally, Zimbabweans are sick and tired of the deadlock between the country's two main political parties. Two-thirds of all respondents in the 2004 Afrobarometer survey in Zimbabwe consider that "problems in this country can only be solved if MDC and ZANU-PF sit down and talk with one another."



MEDIA SURVEY — JUNE 2004

This summary is based on the opinions of Zimbabweans on the state of the media in Zimbabwe. The analysis of the survey findings has also borrowed from other studies and publications on the state of the media in Zimbabwe. The aim was to make an analysis of the various views of the respondents by relating them to other studies of the media. It is believed that such an approach will go a long way in clarifying and explaining various issues pertaining to the state of the media in Zimbabwe.

At independence in 1980, the state owned and controlled a media industry that was and is still pro-government in terms of its form and content. This trend was to continue until the late 1990s. It is quite interesting to note that although there were no laws with regards to the establishment and operations of media houses, not a significant number of privately- owned media organizations were established. The media landscape came under the spotlight in 1999 when critical private media houses joined the media industry. Such included Capitol Radio and the Daily News, which seriously challenged the status quo of the state media.

The Daily News, the most serious contender to the State –aligned The Herald and The Chronicle, was soon followed by the formation of the opposition party The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). This media house was quickly dismissed in government and ruling party circles as supportive of opposition politics in its outlook. The establishment of such private media houses somewhat coincided with the February 2000 “No” vote in the constitutional referendum and the

beginning of the fast track land reform program. Both of these events received major media coverage, with the privately owned media houses at the forefront of stinging criticism of the government.

In response the government promulgated media laws, which it claimed were aimed at bringing order to the media industry in Zimbabwe. These were the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), Broadcasting Services Act (BSA) and Public Order and Security Act (POSA). This reaction by the government was a clear testimony that the government was not going to be tolerant of any diverging views. A case in point was the closure of Capitol Radio, which was implemented despite a High Court ruling compelling the government not to interfere with its operations.

It is essential to note that these laws impacted negatively especially on the private media as witnessed by the subsequent closure of Capitol Radio, Daily News and most recently the Tribune and also the selective arrests and prosecution of journalists from the private media. Considering that the media are regarded as the Fourth Estate with regard to their watchdog role, such a scenario is not healthy for a country, which is trying to prove to the international community that there is respect for human rights, rule of law and democracy.

The government has countered that there is need for regulating media operations in order to protect the state which it argues is under threat from Western imperialists who are trying to re-



colonize Zimbabwe through the use of subtle means such as the sponsoring of opposition political parties and financial support for private media organizations.

Findings

The National Sample

- Of the 1068 respondents that participated in the survey, just 132 less than the targeted 1200, half of them were women whilst the other half were male.

On Education levels and Gender

- It has often been argued that one's level of education determines how they perceive and understand socio-economic and political issues. In this particular survey, 7% of the total respondents could not read or write, of which 49% were male and 51% women. 27% (46% men, 54% women) had received basic primary education, 56% had gone as far as secondary education and of these 53% were male and 47% were women. Only 4% (46% men, 54% female) had attended high school. About 6% had gone to a tertiary institute of which 52% were men and 48% were women.

On age

- The 18-24 year old group (the 'born frees') made up 31% of the total sample, 51% of which were male and 49% female, the 25-34 age category was at 32% with 50% being men and 50% women. 18% of the respondents came from the 35-44 years, 44% of which were male and 56% female. The largest number of male respondents was in the 45-54 year old category which

had 58% men and 42% women out of a total percentage of 9, whilst the 55+ age group made up 10% of the total sample (54% men and 46% women). It would seem that in almost all age groups there are more men than women being interviewed.

On Sources of Media

- Radio broadcasting under the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) was the most common source of information for most respondents with 57% relying on it; this was followed closely by the Zimbabwe Television with 16% of respondents citing it as their key source of information. 12% of the sampled respondents rely on word of mouth. Only 10% rely on local newspapers and magazines, perhaps an indictment on the readership culture of Zimbabwean citizens. It is not surprising that a meager 2% watched Digital Satellites Television, which not only is common in urban areas but expensive to maintain as one has to pay in foreign currency in order to be connected. This was the case with British Broadcasting Corporation, and most other international sources of information, including internet and newspapers.
- Respondents were asked how affordable their source of information was, 68% of the total respondents thought that their sources of information were way too expensive with 55% of men saying their media choice was unaffordable whilst 45% of women agreed with them.

Assessment of the Media

- Almost six in ten respondents were in agreement with the assertion that the



media in Zimbabwe reflects the concerns and interests of the citizens.

Of the 538 men who participated in the survey, 54% of them agree, 8% are indifferent, 35% disagree, and only 3% claimed not to know whether the media in Zimbabwe reflects the concerns and interests of people.

59% of the sampled women thought the media in Zimbabwe reflected the interests and concerns of citizens, 27% disagreed, those who neither agreed nor disagreed were only 8%, whilst 6% did not know if the media reflected people's concerns and only one woman refused to answer the question.

When asked how far they agreed with the assertion that media neglected the ordinary people, 51% were in agreement, 39% disagreed whilst 7% sat on the fence with another 3% hiding behind the "I don't know" response.

The claim that media neglects ordinary people cut across gender lines with five in ten respondents from both sexes supporting it.

There have been claims that the media in Zimbabwe is urban biased at the expense of the rural areas that accommodate about 65% of the total population of the country. Fifty three percent of the respondents felt this was true while thirty seven percent thought otherwise with seven percent neither agreeing nor disagreeing; only three percent were in the dark when it came to such matters.

There was gender consensus on this with 53% of the men and 51% of the women saying this was true, whilst 37% from both sexes disagreed that the media only concentrates on urban areas, 7% and 8% of men and women respectively were not sure, and 4 % women and 2% men did not know.

The public media is largely government controlled and reaches out to a larger number of people compared to the profit seeking private media such that most of the time it is more expensive compared to the public media. 74% of the respondents said they trusted the public media, 19% had no trust at all, whilst 6% did not know where they stood, 1% refused to say.

Six out of every ten respondents thought that the public media in Zimbabwe only reports on issues that are favorable to the government, 24% did not think so whilst 9% neither agreed nor disagreed with the notion.

On whether the private media was a mouthpiece of the opposition, 34% of women and 38% of men agreed with the idea, 11% from both sexes were indifferent, 28% of women and 33% men disagreed, and 23% of the women and 17% of men said they did not know.

Media regulations

Five in ten respondents thought it was the mandate of the government to regulate the media, while 18% preferred an independent body. 15 % thought a professional media body would do the job better, whilst 9 % were of the opinion that media houses themselves could be left to do it. 7% did not know and 1% refused to say.



- ⌘ Of the total sampled population 49% men and 53% women thought the government should regulate the media, 21% and 15% men and women respectively favored an independent body, 15% from both sexes opted for a professional media body, whilst 9% again from both sexes thought that media houses should be empowered to do the job.
- ⌘ Journalists worldwide have been accused many a times of reporting on trivial, sensational cases and delving more in the personal lives of individuals at the expense of critical news and worthy issues. Posed with this question 50% of the respondents agreed, 43% disagreed, 5% were not sure whilst only 2% professed ignorance on this matter.
- ⌘ Government has been criticized for patronizing the accreditation of journalists, especially during elections. An overwhelming 65% of respondents supported the principle that journalists be accredited by government. 27% were against it with only 4% not sure where they stood.
- ⌘ Regarding the media as the “watch dog” of society, 66% were affirmative, 29% did not agree, with just 5% who said they did not know.
- ⌘ A majority of eight out of ten amongst both men and women were strongly against the idea of public media showing explicit material, with only two in every ten of both sexes adopting a liberal stance.

Legislation

- ⌘ Amongst the 33 female respondents who knew about AIPPA, only 6% understood it, only 13% of men knew what AIPPA was all about.
- ⌘ Of those who thought that AIPPA was an ideal piece of legislation, 2% were women whilst 5% were men. Three percent of the men and 2% of women did not care about it, whilst 7% men and 3% women viewed it as draconian and unsuitable.
- ⌘ As with AIPPA the BSA was not well known by the majority of the respondents, with only 15% saying they understood it and 84% professing ignorance on what it was all about.
- ⌘ Only 7% thought the BSA was ideal, 3% did not care and 5% found it harsh.
- ⌘ The little understood media laws and regulations have created an element of mistrust not only between the government and private media but also between the public and private media themselves. As such the media in Zimbabwe has largely become polarized and characterized by what some call “gutter” journalism and mudslinging instead of objectivity. In the process, the public has been deprived of the plurality of media voices.



STREET CHILDREN SURVEY — JULY 2004

The HIV and AIDS pandemic compounded by poverty have brought a lot of misery among children in Africa especially south of the Sahara due to death of family breadwinners, and or disintegration of families.

Zimbabwe has not been spared of the impact of the pandemic that is further compounded by the characteristic migration of workers to seemingly lucrative neighboring countries and the drought that prevailed in the past three years. With the brunt of the care of children falling on the extended family, this social institution has been weakened by socio-economic changes. This has seen a lot of children being left in the care of unloving/ old guardians or young reluctant siblings. This group faces the possibility of fending for the children with little or no remittances being sent home by other relatives.

Many of these children fail to cope with the situation at home and more often take to the streets in search of a life that will never be. An unprecedented number of children live and work on the streets where they are faced with hunger, abuse, and the possibility of engaging in criminal activities.

A good number of them will grow up to be social misfits, in a class of their own, with a bleak future to look forward to. Their situation calls for a holistic approach by the government, NGOs, and the community at large.

This summary is based on a nation wide survey that was carried out by MPOI as part of its core research activities in gauging public opinion on topical issues of public concern. Focus group discussions with street kids in the urban centers of this country were held, questionnaires were administered in the ten provinces of Zimbabwe and in-depth key informant interviews with opinion leaders in urban centers and in Tsholotsho and Mupandawana growth points were done.

MPOI finds that:

On Gender distribution:

- ⌘ An unprecedented number of children live and work on the streets of Zimbabwe. This survey however managed to interview only 135 randomly selected street children who are below the age of 20 years.
- ⌘ They were made up of 102 males (76%), and (24%) 33 females.

AGE	MALE	FEMALE
5-10 years	18% (18)	42% (14)
11-15 years	32% (33)	34% (11)
16-20 years	50% (51)	24% (8)
Total	100% (102)	100% (33)



On Education levels:

◆ Primary level	87%
◆ ZJC	8%
◆ "O" level	7%

On sexual intercourse

- ⌘ 40% openly admitted to having had sexual intercourse at some point in life. Of these 76% were male and 24 % were female suggesting that either there are more boys engaging in sexual intercourse than girls or boys tend to be more open about their sexuality to strangers than girls.
- ⌘ On where first sexual act took place a plurality of the respondents pointed out the streets (42%), 20% claimed to have had sex whilst still residing at their homes. Only 2% had gone to booking houses for sex.
- ⌘ At national level, 60% indicated that they have never intentionally or unintentionally got to the point of having sex.
- ⌘ Of the 2% who cited coercion leading them to have sex in the first place, 67% of them were girls whilst the remainder were boys, suggesting that girls are more vulnerable to sexual violence than boys both at home and in the streets.
- ⌘ Only 2 boys out of a total of 49 respondents who had had sex, admitted to having sex in exchange of money.
- ⌘ Peer pressure tends to be higher amongst boys than girls, with 18 %(boys) and 2 %(girls) alluding to it as having led to their first sexual act. The majority of the respondents

(63%), with boys again taking the lead, had sex just to experiment.

On abuse:

- ⌘ When asked if they had ever been abused, 57% of the respondents were affirmative (66% boys, 30% girls) whilst 43% (34% boys, 70% girls) denied any abuse. Again as in sexual intercourse there are a higher number of boys than girls being victims.
- ⌘ The highest number of these abuse incidents took place in the streets, with 31% of the children saying so, 22% claim to have been abused at home, with only 11% being victims both at home and later in the streets.
- ⌘ The most common type of abuse was physical and emotional (50%), this ranged from beatings to pushes and kicks, usually accompanied by insults and jeers. 8% claimed to have been emotionally abused; whilst combined incidences of sexual, physical and emotional abuse were only reported by 3% of the respondents.

On their future

- ⌘ Only 13 children, making up 10% of the total respondents (9% of them boys and 12% being girls) said they wanted to continue living and or working in the streets whilst 90% wanted off the streets.
- ⌘ Of the 18 girls who answered on whether they wanted to reunite with their families or not, all of them were keen to do so, unlike boys, some of whom did not know what they want.



OPINION

THE YEAR 2004: A POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

By Eldred V. Masunungure

Because 2003 was a nasty year, every Zimbabwean expected 2004 to be nastier, and on all fronts. What with annualized inflation for January 2004 having shot up to 623% and Finance Minister Herbert Murerwa having predicted that inflation would first rise to 700% before starting the slow downward movement. Many Zimbabweans were therefore justified in expecting a nightmarish 2004.

Zimbabweans remained a joyless people with a joyless economy in a joyless country. Zimbabwe remained a combustible country though the inflammable ingredients were operating with diminished strength compared to the previous three years. Momentous developments took place and often at a dizzying pace culminating in the Zanu-PF Congress in early December which itself was preceded by the Tsholotsho debacle, the reverberations of which will be felt well into 2005. Then there was the untimely death in August of veteran nationalist, legal luminary and one-time presidential aspirant Dr Eddison Zvobgo who was fittingly declared a national hero as had been his wife who had died two months earlier. In the same month in August three other developments took place. A few days before the SADC Summit in Mauritius, the Zimbabwe Government gazetted the widely criticized Non-Governmental Organizations Bill described by the NGO apex association Nango as "the Bill that kills when

Zimbabwe needs life". The Bill, which has since been passed by the Zanu-PF dominated Parliament, ostensibly seeks to regulate the operations of NGOs but appears in fact to want to pulverize them in the same manner the government did with the media, courtesy of POSA and AIPPA. Then came the SADC Summit where all heads of state and government, including Zimbabwe's President Mugabe, endorsed the historic SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections to the obvious delight of the MDC which sought to use these electoral norms as a bargaining and diplomatic weapon to force the government to level the electoral playing field in Zimbabwe. Pursuant on this strategy of applying pressure, the MDC announced in late August that it was suspending its participation in Zimbabwe's elections until acceptable levels of transparency and fairness were guaranteed consistent with the SADC protocol.

October 15 was a Good Friday for MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai who was surprisingly acquitted by the High Court on treason charges for allegedly plotting to assassinate President Robert Mugabe and stage a coup. Judge Paddington Garwe ruled that the prosecution's case was not credible prompting an outraged Minister of Justice Patrick Chinamasa to declare that Tsvangirai "has been wrongly acquitted". The



Government appealed against the decision to the Supreme Court while another treason trial also menacingly hangs over the MDC leader's head.

The MDC itself started 2004 on a bad note, losing the otherwise safe Zengeza constituency in a bloodstained electoral campaign. It later surrendered two more parliamentary seats to the ruling party following its decision to suspend participation in all elections. It is also fair to say 2004 saw the MDC degenerating into a disoriented party with a dispirited leadership shepherding an increasingly fatalistic flock. Its now legendary indecision and prevarication over the critical issue of participating in the crucial March 2005 elections engendered further confusion and uncertainty. It definitely needs to be reinvigorated if it is not to be eclipsed from the Zimbabwe political scene.

On the political front, two other major developments dominated the landscape: the much vaunted anti-corruption crusade and the turbulence within the ruling Zanu-PF party occasioned by the scramble for presidential succession. Announcing his new "war cabinet" in February 2004 Mugabe warned of a new war front, "the internal war to fight the evils within our system, to fight corruption, to fight tendencies to amass wealth at the expense of the nation, to fight indiscipline, to fight crime". Zanu-PF legislator and black empowerment businessman, the flamboyant and 'born-again' Phillip Chiyangwa, was the first high profile politician to be arrested on charges of contempt of court, perjury and attempting to obstruct the course of justice in a case involving the directors of the collapsed

financial services company, ENG. He was cleared of these charges in August. Other high visibility ruling party politicians were to follow, notably James Makamba in February and Finance Minister Kuruneri in April, with the latter still languishing in remand prison. Chiyangwa was re-arrested in December on state security charges and therefore ended 2004 where he started it, in prison. The anti-corruption crusade is still work-in-progress and interfaces well with the scramble for strategic positions in Zanu-PF and with a keen eye on State House by the ensemble of political gladiators of various ideological and other dubious persuasions. This opened floodgates for the bitter politics of succession in the party which claimed the political lives or reversed the political fortunes of several ruling party leaders and triggering wild celebrations among their many detractors both within and outside the ruling party.

Eminent political scientist, the late Masipula Sithole wrote a seminal work in the late 1970s entitled "Struggles within the Struggle". At the time of his untimely death in March 2002 he was writing a sequel to this book which was to be entitled "Struggles after the Struggle". Are the trials and tribulations within Zanu-PF part of the struggles after the struggle? Was the suspension of the 'gang of six' party chairpersons and the expulsion of others from the Central Committee and Politburo the end of these struggles or merely the beginning of the end or, for that matter, the end of the beginning?

The vice-presidency vacancy created by the death of Simon Muzenda and the expectations of various ruling party factions as to who would fill



the gap and Mugabe's hint that he would not stand in the 2008 presidential elections further ignited and fuelled 'the struggles after the struggle'. The intrigues and counter-intrigues, scheming and counter-scheming, alliances and counter-alliances and the general hard pushing and shoving that is an intricate and integral part of the *tamba wakachenjera* (play it craftily) politics of Zanu-PF first burst into the open with the announced internal investigation into the ruling party's business empire and centering on Parliamentary Speaker Emmerson Mnangagwa, an alleged aspirant to the presidential throne. It reached full circle with the so-called Tsholotsho Declaration of November 2004 reportedly spearheaded by the party Young Turks otherwise disparagingly labeled *mafikizolo*, meaning newcomers. The fallout from this Tsholotsho debacle gripped the nation's attention in the last few weeks of November 2004 and provided a much needed respite from the daily toils of life in Zimbabwe. So did the appointment of a woman as ruling party and State vice president.

The unprecedented appointment of the first female Vice-President was justifiably a cause for celebration not only by the ruling party's Women's League but across the political divide in this sharply polarized political community. But was the appointment merely a symbolic one or genuine recognition not only of Joyce Mujuru's illustrious career but also a political acknowledgement of the decisive role that gender plays in shaping and reshaping Zimbabwean politics? Whatever the case may be, the salience of the gender factor can no longer be dismissed. The main opposition Movement for Democratic Change can ignore this reality at its own political peril. These exciting political developments took us into 2005, a year that threatens to be an equally turbulent one. Only time will tell.

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N.B. The views expressed in this article are not necessarily shared by MPOI