



*Defending free expression and your right to know*

*The mass media have a critical role to play during “election periods” acting as the main sources of information for the public about the prevailing political environment, the preparations for holding the elections, and about the political contestants themselves. As the holding of harmonised elections on July 31<sup>st</sup> 2013 approaches, the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ) will be carrying daily media updates on this momentous event until the day after the election results are announced. The daily media updates monitor the output of the mainstream domestic print and electronic media relating to coverage of election issues. This is aimed primarily at establishing whether the media is communicating the information the public needs to make informed decisions when they go and vote – and whether they can vote freely. For any views and comments, you can email us at [monitors@mmpz.org.zw](mailto:monitors@mmpz.org.zw)*

**The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe**

**Daily Election Report – No.13-2013**

**Saturday, July 27<sup>th</sup> 2013**

## **Daily electronic media report for Friday July 26, 2013**

### **SUMMARY**

WITH just four days left before elections the national public broadcaster, ZBC, has maintained its high intensity bias in favour of ZANU PF in its coverage of the parties' campaigns.

In this evening's main ZTV news bulletin seven of the nine campaign stories were on ZANU PF (one disparaged the MDC-T leader's private life and another reported on the party's star rally in Domboshava).

But stories about the administration of the upcoming elections also competed with President Mugabe for attention in the news tonight. While the nine stories on Mugabe and ZANU PF's campaign activities received nearly 26 minutes of the bulletin, administration issues ran in a close second place extending for

more than 20 minutes too.

However, political advertising is also now clearly favouring ZANU PF. MMPZ noted the entry of five new political advertisements on ZTV and two new voter education adverts from ZEC.

During a five-hour period of prime-time viewing ZTV flighted nine ZANU PF adverts ranging between 35 seconds and one minute in length, while it only flighted three 30-second MDC-T adverts. In addition the national public television station also flighted three 45-second “adverts” whose origins are unattributed, but which attack the personality of the Prime Minister, Morgan Tsvangirai. Of the nine ZANU PF adverts, three are new and use original MDC-T advertising material that has been manipulated to undermine Tsvangirai’s reputation by giving the impression that he is a man of loose morals.

The private radio station, SW Radio Africa also reported that ZBC had refused to air two MDC-T campaign adverts. The report quoted “*MDC-T, sources*” at ZBC saying management felt the messages on the MDC-T adverts were “*too powerful*” and would be difficult for ZANU-PF to match them.

## THE STATS

The electronic media carried a total of 40 election-related stories. [Party campaigns 15, administrative issues 20, three on human rights abuses and media issues, two].

ZBC aired 19 election-related stories (ZTV 16, Spot FM three), while the private radio stations carried 21 [SW Radio Africa and Studio 7 each carried six stories, while ZiFM carried five and Star FM four].

Of these, ZTV carried eight stories on the administration of elections, while Spot FM carried two. The private media addressed these issues – including allegations that ZANU PF planned to rig the elections – in 10 reports.

ZTV’s main news segment constituted 53 minutes 54 seconds and comprised 25 minutes 56 seconds on ZANU-PF campaign activities, 7 minutes 32 seconds on the MDC-T, and 20 minutes 26 seconds on administrative issues.

## CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

### ZANU PF rallies dominate the airwaves

During the day, ZTV and Spot FM gave President Mugabe’s eighth “star” rally in Mkoba, Gweru two hours and 10 minutes of live coverage, which included one hour and 35 minutes of him speaking.

Predictably, this also led the evening news bulletins on both the public radio and television stations. While it served as the only story on political party

campaigns on Spot FM, ZTV carried eight other stories on ZANU PF's campaign activities around the country.

But Tsvangirai did attract second place in the bulletin telling his Domboshava audience that, ***“we will conduct our own collation of results. We will then announce that we have won whether they like it or not.”***

ZTV reported this in the context that the Prime Minister had declared his intention to break the law, which forbids anybody other than the electoral commission from announcing the results of elections.

Stories focusing on ZANU PF's activities included reports of senior officials making a variety of promises, such as reviving Kadoma's textile industry and Kadoma's gold mines (Vice-President Joice Mujuru), while First Lady Grace Mugabe was reported doling out tons of food at her husband's Mkoba rally.

The private media's coverage of the political parties' campaigns also appeared selective. For example, in their six reports ZiFM aired three on ZANU PF, while Star FM and Studio 7 carried one each. No other parties were covered, and MDC-T's rally in Domboshava on that day was also missing from their reports. SW Radio Africa reported on MDC-T's problems in Makoni Central but was silent on ZANU PF activities. While the coverage of campaign reports was unbalanced, the private media's treatment of the stories they covered was fair and unbiased.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES**

### **Poll preparations attract complaints**

ZBC reported that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission's preparations for next Wednesday's elections were proceeding according to plan – and reported the head of the African Union's observer team, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, giving ***“Zimbabwe's poll the thumbs-up”*** (ZTV).

Notably, ZTV did report MDC-T leader Morgan Tsvangirai complaining about Dlamini-Zuma's ***“conduct”***, accusing her of ***“deliberately ignoring complaints raised by his party regarding the way the electoral process is being conducted”***.

But it suffocated details of his complaints.

SW Radio Africa and Studio 7 only reported these, which included ZEC's failure to provide the political parties with a consolidated voters' roll just five days before the election, and the fact that last-minute changes to the vote-counting process – where counting would take place at ward level and not at polling stations – was a violation of the electoral regulations.

On allegations of ZANU PF recruiting militias, ZTV reported Dlamini-Zuma saying, ***“Our view is that we don't deal with rumours....”***

ZTV and the private radio stations reported on the discovery of special early

vote ballot papers, allegedly completed in favour of the MDC-T, being found in a dustbin at ZEC's Election Command Centre. ZTV only reported that ZEC had **"reserved its judgement"** on this development.

The public broadcaster gave greater prominence to news that the printing of ballots was now complete and that the Constitutional Court had ruled in favour of ZEC's application seeking to grant those who were unable to vote in its special early voting exercise earlier this month a second chance to do so on Election Day.

SW Radio Africa, ZiFM and Star FM also reported this news. But only SWRA quoted the MDC-T's deputy director of elections, Morgan Komichi welcoming the ruling. He also noted **"that ZEC did not seek to extend the same privilege to thousands of Zimbabweans who failed to register during the chaotic registration campaign."**

## Media Issues

SW Radio Africa reported that the Posts and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (Potraz) banned bulk text messaging until after the elections (See MMPZ's Daily Report No.12 for details of this).

## Political violence

Studio 7 reported three incidents of political violence:

- MDC-T candidate for Mberengwa North, Takavafira Zhou allegedly attacked by more than 50 ZANU PF youths.
- MDC-T sourced reports that ZANU PF activists and war veterans in Mashonaland Central were harassing their supporters.
- MDC-T candidate for Uzumba in Mashonaland East, Peckson Kazingizi, alleged that war veterans' leader Jabulani Sibanda had threatened villagers with unspecified retribution if they did not vote for ZANU PF.

## Current affairs Programmes

ZTV aired two programmes:

**The Election Debate:** A new hour-long programme broadcast after the main news bulletin. Guests in this edition were Moreprecision Muzadzi of the Voice of the People Party, Cosmas Muponda of the Freedom Front Party, and Emelia Mukaratirwa representing ZAPU; and

***Retracing the footsteps:*** Another hour-long repeat production chronicling the events taken by Robert Mugabe and Edgar Tekere in their escape to Mozambique during the colonial era.

STAR FM carried one election-related programme sponsored by a group called XIG.

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## **Print Media report for Saturday, July 27, 2013**

### **SUMMARY**

Zimbabwe's polarised political climate was reflected today in the way the government-run *Herald* and private press (*NewsDay* and the *Daily News*) were unable to reconcile on the administrative readiness of the country to hold elections.

With just four days to go before the harmonised elections *The Herald* revelled in claims by the African Union Commission's chairperson Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma that none of the presidential candidates had complained about the possibility of election rigging.

This contrasted sharply with reports in the private press where Prime Minister Tsvangirai was reported questioning Dlamini-Zuma's integrity, claiming to have notified the AU Commission chairperson about irregularities in the voters' roll, as well as alerting her to an imminent threat of vote rigging.

*NewsDay* and the *Daily News* both reported Prime Minister Tsvangirai stating that a batch of special ballot papers cast in favour of Tsvangirai were retrieved from a dustbin at the Zimbabwe Election Commission National Command Centre. These reports were censored in *The Herald*.

In another development, all the papers announced that the Constitutional Court has allowed special voters who failed to cast their ballot on July 14 and 15 to vote on July 31.

## THE STATS

The print media carried 36 election-related reports.

Of these, 22 (61%) appeared in the privately-owned *Daily News and NewsDay*. The remaining 14 (39%) were captured in *The Herald*.

Of the 36 reports, 18 (50%) were on political party activities while 12 (33%) were on the administration of the elections. *Daily News* reported two incidents of political violence. Both private papers recorded one pertinent media issue apiece; *NewsDay* revealed the sprouting of websites providing information about the upcoming elections, while the *Daily News* reported that a Kenyan journalist had been detained for entering the country without accreditation.

Ten election-related adverts appeared in the print media. The private press carried nine of them; *Daily News* had six, while *NewsDay* posted three. Of these, six were party advertisements – both papers carried three adverts each for ZANU PF and MDC-T. The remaining adverts were sponsored by civic organisations.

## CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

### Herald amplifies ZANU PF voice

The print media carried 18 reports on political party activities, which gave more prominence to the two main political contestants. Of these, nine appeared in the private press; *Daily News* (six) and *NewsDay* (three). Of the *Herald's* nine stories, five were positive ZANU PF campaigns while the remaining four were negative reports on MDC-T (three) and one on Mavambo/Kusile/Dawn (MKD).

In its usual show of partisan publicity, the government-run *Herald* splashed news of President Mugabe attacking his political rivals, the MDC-T, at his star rally in Mkoba, Gweru on its front page.

He accused the MDC-T councillors of being “thieves”, and poured scorn on the West and the gay community who he said “**deserve a burdizzo**”.

*The Herald's* regular columnist, propaganda writer Nathaniel Manheru, predicted the imminent demise of the MDC-T and that tensions within the party, “... **suggest a party about to throw in the towel. Or bent on a more sinister option: to spoil the vote. Whichever way matters take, there will not be an MDC-T after August 5**”.

*The Herald's* coverage of other political parties' activities did not befit the conduct of a publicly owned newspaper, distorting the main focus of their activities.

For example, the paper labels MDC-T leader Morgan Tsvangirai “**a philanderer**” in its story “following up” the comments of the MDC-T's Theresa Makone defending her boss against allegations of sexual promiscuity.

The private press on the other hand, continued to expose the plight of the electorate during the parties' campaigns. Both private newspapers reported

ZANU PF supporters who had been bussed to Mugabe's star rally in Masvingo but were unable to get transport back home. The *Daily News* quoted a villager from Chikombedzi saying, "**we were forced into trucks and threatened with severe consequences if we defied their order**". The paper also blew the whistle on Grace Mugabe's "**vote buying spree**" in Masvingo. However, it didn't seek ZEC's opinion on this violation of the country's electoral laws.

## ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

### Rigging? What rigging?

*The Herald* carried five stories on the administration of the July 31 elections, while the private press carried eight.

*The Herald* celebrated and prominently reported AU Commissioner Dlamini-Zuma's dismissal of any vote-rigging claims. In response to a question asked by a journalist from the London-based *Guardian* whether the commission had received evidence of a ZANU PF rigging plot, her response was "**none of them** (the political parties) **mentioned any document; none of them even used the word rigging**".

Dlamini-Zuma also dismissed claims of an imminent threat of vote rigging being highlighted by the press saying, "**I don't work on newspaper reports or speculation**".

This comment did not go down well with MDC-T leader Morgan Tsvangirai, who was quoted in *The Herald* and *NewsDay* questioning Dlamini-Zuma's integrity and insisting that he had raised his fears of vote rigging in his briefing with the AU observer mission. He was quoted: "**It puts to question her integrity as an impartial observer to this process**". However, Tsvangirai's concerns were not given as much prominence as they were buried inside the story.

All three papers reported the AU commission noting that all parties had agreed they would not dispute the outcome of the polls if they were credible. The observer mission's chairperson urged parties that would want to dispute the result to, "**please do it legally and not through the streets because the streets will cause tension**".

All papers reported the Constitutional Court granting a reprieve to all those who were unable to vote during ZEC's early voting exercise earlier this month, a second chance. However, Chief Justice Chidyausiku withheld reasons for the judgment. But only the *Daily News* highlighted that it was a majority ruling of the nine-member Bench and that some judges had expressed their reservations.

The paper reported that Justice Bharat Patel "**questioned the practicality of the process in light of fears that officers might vote twice**". However, ZEC lawyer Tawanda Kanengoni countered this, saying the names of those who had voted would be removed from the voters' roll. Another judge, Elizabeth

Gwaunza, questioned how the officers who will be on duty would be able to vote in their constituencies when they have been deployed.

Only the private press reported Prime Minister Tsvangirai's 'revelation' that ballots cast in his favour during the special vote were discovered in a dustbin at the ZEC command centre. This reaffirms his party's claims that the upcoming elections are likely to be flawed.

## **MEDIA ISSUES**

There were two noteworthy media developments today. The *Daily News* reported the arrest and detention of Kenyan journalist, Charles Omondi, at Harare International Airport because he **“did not have adequate accreditation papers”** required by Zimbabwe's electoral laws. Omondi works for Nairobi-based *Nation* newspaper.

*NewsDay* reported an increase in poll-related websites in Zimbabwe. The paper identified three recently launched sites; 2013 Harmonised elections ([www.electionride.com](http://www.electionride.com)) and Zim Voices Elections ([www.zimelections2013.com](http://www.zimelections2013.com)), and a special election “hub” set up by Google (<http://www.google.co.zw/elections/ed/zw>). The websites are aimed at providing election-related information services.

## **POLITICAL VIOLENCE**

Only the *Daily News* reported two incidents of political violence:

- A hut in Headlands belonging to an MDC-T activist was destroyed by fire in a suspected case of political violence; and
- Reports of intimidation and violence in the Chaka area of Chirumanzu District in Midlands where traditional chiefs were alleged to have threatened and intimidated MDC-T supporters in order to force them to attend ZANU PF rallies and not to vote for the MDC-T.

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