



Defending free expression and your right to know

The mass media are assigned an important role in political campaigns on popular votes. As the holding of a referendum on a new constitution on March 16 2013 approaches, the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ) will be carrying daily media updates on this momentous event until the day after the referendum results are announced. This is aimed primarily at establishing whether the media is communicating pertinent information to the public during the final referendum campaigns. For any views and comments, you can email us at monitors@mmpz.org.zw or sms us on our dedicated cellphone line 0776 739 522.

**The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
Daily Media Referendum Watch – 3
Wednesday, March 13th 2013**

Electronic media report for Wednesday, March 13th, 2013

SUMMARY

THE electronic media carried 22 reports on the constitutional referendum, 13 (59%) of which appeared in the private radio stations.

The remaining nine appeared on the national broadcaster, ZBC: ZTV (seven) and Spot FM (two).

Private radio stations carried the remaining seven stories.

Nine of the 22 reports were on the 'Yes Vote' campaign by the Parliamentary Select Committee (Copac), ZANU PF and the MDC-T, while three were on the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA)'s campaign against the new constitution.

Ten were on the administrative aspect of the referendum.

CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

‘Vote Yes’ campaign saturates ZBC

THE national broadcaster, ZBC, only promoted voices campaigning for the adoption of the draft constitution in the referendum in the five reports it carried on the issue.

This campaign was led by the Constitutional Parliamentary Select Committee (Copac) and the three coalition parties.

The station suffocated those individuals and organisations expressing reservations about the endorsement of the draft such as the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA).

Among those reported urging Zimbabweans to ‘Vote Yes’ were Vice President Joice Mujuru, ZANU PF’s Politburo members Dzikamai Mavhaire and Nelson Mawema and the party’s provincial officials Paul Chimedza and Gordon Mujawo, and MDC-T national organizing secretary Nelson Chamisa (ZTV, 12/3, 8pm).

ZTV (12/3, 8pm) only reported the position of the NCA in the context of dismissing its reservations. The station reported that it had **“sought comment”** from **“anti-draft constitution renegade”** Lovemore Madhuku who reportedly claimed: **“It’s not a people’s constitution, it’s a constitution by political leaders”**. No attempt was made to elaborate on the NCA’s concerns.

The private electronic media carried four reports on the parties and Copac’s ‘Vote Yes’ campaign and the NCA’s resolve to mobilize Zimbabweans to ‘Vote No’ (ZiFM, SW Radio Africa, 12/3).

In one such report, ZiFM reported the MDC-N as now running an independent ‘Yes Vote’ campaign after pulling out of the Copac’s campaign in protest against what they perceived to be **“unequal representation in the campaign”**.

The station reported the party as having successfully held campaigns in Bulawayo and Matabeleland South on their own.

In another, SW Radio Africa reported Madhuku expressing confidence that his organization would receive a favourable ruling from the Supreme Court, saying he was **“almost certain”** that the Supreme Court would agree with the NCA position as citizens have a legal right to challenge the president.

He is quoted: **“Our legal basis is founded on the constitution itself. You cannot have a head of government who makes a decision that affects the rights of the people and cannot take them to court.”**

Explaining why he is spearheading a vote No campaign, Madhuku said the constitutional draft was a bad one, which will give Zimbabwe a defective constitution: **“This is also about rejecting the flawed process whereby politicians sit and negotiate what should go into a constitution, have their compromises based on their political interests and pass that as a constitution for the whole country”**.

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

ZEC receives referendum money

NEWS of the Zimbabwe Republic Police expressing readiness to maintain peace during the pre and post-referendum period dominated the media's coverage of the administration of the referendum.

The news constituted six of the 10 stories the media carried on the issue.

The remaining four were follow up reports on the arrival of the SADC election observer mission and revelations by the principals' spokesman, Prime Minister Tsvangirai, that government had resolved to re-engage the United Nations Development Programme for supplementary poll funding under new terms of reference (ZBC, 12/3, 8pm).

The report quoted the Prime Minister telling a Press conference that the **“country does not have money to fund the referendum and elections”**, revealing also that the principals were still to reach a consensus on the involvement of international observers.

The station said this followed last week's announcement by the government that **“observers from countries that imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe would not be allowed into the country”**.

However, the Prime Minister Tsvangirai was quoted saying the principals had agreed that ZEC must not prohibit local civil society organizations from accreditation on the basis that they were facing investigations. In addition, he was reported expressing confidence on ZEC's ability to conduct credible elections as long as the commission carried its mandate.

CURRENT AFFAIRS PROGRAMMES

ZTV and Star FM carried one current affairs programme each on the draft constitution and referendum.

ZTV's programme, *Melting Pot*, hosted by Oscar Pambuka, discussed how draft addresses the aspirations of the youth. It featured Zimbabwe Congress of Students Union (ZICASU) Harare province leader Mugove Chisvo, who is a political science student at the University of Zimbabwe.

Chisvo urged youths to go and vote for the draft, arguing: **“As ZICASU, we endorse the constitution as it encompasses the various socio-political and economic spheres of life. It's a holistic constitution and come to redress the injustices of the past constitution...The virtues of the people are encompassed through issues of economic empowerment, indigenization and gender equality”**.

Star FM's programme, *The Solution*, which was hosted by AC Lumumba, featured two pastors, Pertunia Chiriseri and Dedza, as panelists.

The two expressed reservations about the constitution draft on the basis it subtly allowed abortion and homosexuality. They cited Chapter 78:1:3 of the draft, for example, which they argued prohibits same sex marriages but not the act of homosexuality itself, a loophole that can be used by gays.

Print media report for Wednesday, March 13th, 2013

SUMMARY

THE print media carried 23 reports on the constitutional referendum, to be held on Saturday March 16th.

Of these, 14 appeared in the private media, while the remaining nine were contained in the state-owned dailies.

Seven of the 18 reports were on the ongoing 'Yes Vote' campaign by Zimbabwe's main political parties and several churches. Two reported the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA)'s opposition to the draft.

Seven were on the administrative aspect of the referendum. The remaining four were on calls for Zimbabweans to observe and maintain peace during voting.

CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

'Vote Yes' campaign gets more coverage

THE print media carried seven reports on campaign activities of Zimbabwe's main political parties, the Constitutional Parliamentary Select Committee (Copac) and civil society organizations campaigning for and against the adoption of the proposed constitution.

Of these, four appeared in the private papers, while the remaining three were contained in the official dailies.

The official papers' reports were on Copac co-chairmen Douglas Mwonozora and Paul Mangwana and ZANU PF Politburo member Obert Mpofu explaining some of the contents of the draft and urging Zimbabweans to **"go out in large numbers and Vote Yes in the referendum"** (*The Herald* and *Chronicle*, 13/3).

But these media ignored concerns by some Zimbabweans, led by the NCA, who are opposed to the draft.

The private media also gave more coverage to the 'Yes Vote' campaign.

The highlight of this campaign was a statement by the Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denominations, a grouping of church leaders across the country, expressing support for the draft. In a statement, the group said it would continue to engage political leaders in efforts to revisit areas it has misgivings on. These included issues to do with homosexuality and abortion, which the Church feels **“were not comprehensively dealt with in the draft”**.

The Herald and *Daily News* reported a suspected incident of political motivated violence in Makoni. It involved the petrol bombing of a home belonging to a ZANU-PF official, William Chapepa, by unidentified suspects in the early hours of Tuesday morning. Although both papers quoted the police confirming the incident, the police did not link it to the referendum.

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

ZEC claims to be ready for referendum

Reports of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) and the police expressing their readiness for Saturday's referendum were highlights of the media's coverage of the administration of the vote.

The news coincided with reports of Prime Minister Tsvangirai's backing of ZEC while addressing journalists after a principals' meeting at his Munhumutapa offices in Harare (*NewsDay*, 13/3). The daily reported Tsvangirai as saying the commission was **“competent enough to handle elections”**.

The Herald (13/3) gave details of ZEC's preparations, focusing on the commission's distribution of electoral materials such as indelible ink, ballot papers and ballot boxes to all the provinces **“under tight security”**. The official daily reported ZEC acting chairperson Joyce Kazembe's hope that the situation would remain calm and that the referendum would be conducted successfully.

Kazembe disclosed that ZEC would immediately pay polling officers 30 percent of their allowances with the balance being deposited into their respective bank accounts at the completion of the exercise. Reportedly, the polling officers were drawn from lists ZEC obtained from various civil service departments, local authorities and parastatals.

Both the government and private dailies reported the police reiterating their readiness to deal with perpetrators of violence during and after the referendum.

In addition, these media reported a cross section of the Zimbabwean society,

particularly the business community, expressing grave concern over government's decision to increase fuel prices to raise funds for elections. They viewed the measure as "**desperate**" and "**retrogressive**" and an unnecessary "**burden**" on taxpayers, the majority of which are finding it difficult to eke out a living (*The Herald, NewsDay* and *Daily News*).

The three dailies carried three adverts on voter education each: Copac inserted one while the remaining two belonged to ZEC.

The Copac advert urged Zimbabweans to "Vote Yes" and explained why they should do so. One of the ZEC adverts notified Zimbabweans about the printing and distribution of 12 million ballot papers and their breakdown per province. The other was a supplement listing of ZEC's Command and Collation centers.

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) also carried an advert in the private dailies urging Zimbabweans to go and vote in peace.

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