



*Defending free expression and the right to know*

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**The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe  
Monday June 7<sup>th</sup> - Sunday June 13<sup>th</sup> 2010  
Weekly Media Review 2010-22**

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## **THE WEEK'S TOP STORIES**

ALTHOUGH there was a significant increase in the media's coverage of the constitutional reform programme compared to last week as the nation awaited the launch of the Constitutional Parliamentary Select Committee's outreach exercise (by 58% in terms of the number of stories), the quality of the coverage still raised more questions than answers. Although COPAC inserted supplements in the Press identifying team members and venues for the consultation meetings in many of the country's wards, there was no timetable for these meetings or any reassurances about the security of those making submissions. None of the media followed-up COPAC's advertising initiative and few thought to pursue other issues of evident concern.

In other stories, the Kimberley Process monitor Abbey Chikane's alleged certification of Chiadzwa's controversial diamonds sparked mixed reactions in the media and competed for attention alongside news of fresh tension in the coalition, ignited by blatant attempts to undermine the office of the Prime Minister by senior members of the ZANU PF arm of government.

**Fig 1: The most popular stories**

| Media                    | Inclusive government | Constitution reforms | Human rights | Chiadzwa diamonds |
|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Public Press             | 14                   | 14                   | 7            | 10                |
| ZBC                      | 8                    | 32                   | 0            | 23                |
| Private papers           | 22                   | 8                    | 13           | 12                |
| Private electronic media | 9                    | 9                    | 18           | 12                |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>53</b>            | <b>63</b>            | <b>38</b>    | <b>57</b>         |

## Public media fail the nation

IN THE week before the constitutional outreach consultation programme kicked off, there was still precious little effort by either the Constitutional Parliamentary Select Committee (COPAC) or the media to publicize essential issues about the exercise.

While COPAC at least had supplements published about the venues for its public consultation meetings around the country, there has been no information about when they are due to take place. Nor has the committee – or the media – given any priority to publicizing the “talking points” that will be raised at these meetings to allow the public some time to discuss and understand them.

Although the private media have carried stories about a few of the major issues, such as the structure of government and the powers of the Executive, there has been no consistent campaign in any of the media to debate these all-important issues. The few stories in the government media have only reflected ZANU PF’s opinion.

COPAC and the public media, whose duty it is to provide clear, unbiased and useful information about such an important exercise, have manifestly failed to lead the way in preparing the nation for the national consultation that is now underway.

For example, the national public broadcaster, ZBC, should have been working closely with COPAC to provide the nation with regular “constitutional affairs” programmes about the essential talking points long ago to prepare the people for the consultation that is to continue for the next two months or more.

This is the duty of a national public broadcaster – and COPAC should simply have demanded ZBC’s cooperation in producing such programmes as part of its national duty.

But *The Zimbabwe Independent* (11/6) provided some explanation for the information drought on ZBC when it reported that the broadcaster was demanding extortionate fees to air COPAC awareness programmes and adverts. The only publicity appearing on ZTV were four ineffectual generic adverts from COPAC urging the nation to participate in its outreach programme.

The broadcaster – and the Zimpapers' group of newspapers – have been guilty of gross negligence in this regard and have instead, only focused on providing publicity for ZANU PF's "constitutional awareness" campaign and bland calls by special interest groups for the protection of their rights in a new supreme law.

During the week 35 of the 46 stories (76%) the public media carried on constitutional issues were on campaigns by ZANU PF and its allies (chiefs and war veterans) urging Zimbabweans to support their views on the new constitution, chief among them, defence of the country's sovereignty, land reform and indigenization programmes, and an outlaw on homosexuality. Five were on aspirations by special interest groups such as environmentalists, women's groups and the disabled. The remaining six were on administrative problems, including MPs' demands for increased allowances.

Only *The Manica Post* (11/6) reported COPAC co-chairman Douglas Mwonzora saying there would be an average of two meetings in every ward. However, it failed to ask him why it had taken so long to publicize the talking points or question Zimbabweans' ability to effectively contribute in the absence of such important information. It passively quoted Mwonzora saying the 30 talking points could be accessed from COPAC's offices and would be publicized, alongside venues of outreach meetings, ***"through ZBC and various print media publications"***.

While the private media have no obligation to fulfill the duties of the public media, they focused primarily on administrative problems afflicting the constitutional reform process. These included ZBC's exorbitant charges to broadcast COPAC programmes, reluctance by the ZANU PF side of government to suspend the Public Order and Security Act (POSA), which the MDC-T and civil society, argue undermined Zimbabweans' rights to freely assemble and express themselves during the outreach programme, the information drought, and the intimidation of villagers to support ZANU PF's views on the new constitution.

## Charamba stokes coalition tensions

THE offensive and unwarranted attack on Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai by presidential spokesman George Charamba for authorizing the signing of a bilateral investment protection and promotion agreement (BIPPA) with South Korea allegedly without the authority to do so, epitomized the ZANU PF arm of government's disrespect of its coalition partner.

The government media approvingly reported Charamba's statements, characterized by derisive language, without viewing them as a fresh threat to the coalition's cohesion and a violation of the spirit of the Global Political Agreement (GPA).

*The Herald* (9/10) quoted Charamba and unidentified government officials describing Tsvangirai's action as **"null and void"** in its front-page report. Charamba said only President Mugabe, with Cabinet's approval, could bind Zimbabwe to another country through a bilateral investment agreement. He described as **"absurd"** Tsvangirai's decision to delegate Science and Technology Minister Heneri Dzinotyiwei to sign the agreement on Zimbabwe's behalf, adding that the event was merely a **"mock signing ceremony of a BIPPA that might be signed in future by those constitutionally delegated to do so"**.

The private media reported public reaction to Charamba's comments as being an illustration of the blatant disrespect for Tsvangirai by the ZANU PF component of government.

They quoted commentators and the MDC-T arguing that Charamba's actions had the potential to widen divisions in the coalition, incite other government officials and ZANU PF supporters to do the same, harm the country's image and discourage foreign investment.

## Deadlock disguised

ALL THE media failed to clarify the state of the power-sharing negotiations.

While the government media simply glossed over the deadlock by giving the impression that the coalition principals had eventually succeeded in resolving most of the outstanding issues under the political accord, the private media insisted that the parties had failed to resolve them and had referred the dispute to the facilitator, South African President Jacob Zuma.

*The Sunday Mail* (13/6) claimed that the coalition principals had eventually broken the power-sharing deadlock under its front-page report: *Principals agree on sticking points*, citing President Mugabe. However, nowhere in the report did Mugabe say so. Mugabe only said the principals had **"finalized a report on their position"**, which indicated **"areas of agreement and those contested"**, and that the South African facilitating team was expected in Zimbabwe the following day to assess progress.

*ZimOnline* (10/6) quoted senior officials from the two MDC formations confirming the power sharing deadlock. One of them, the Prime Minister's spokesman James Maridadi, said: **"There are some agreements and disagreements.... But I can't say much save to say that the ball is now in President Zuma's court"**.

## ***Distortion and censorship***

The government-controlled media widely reported stories that portrayed government, especially the ZANU PF side of it, in a favourable light while distorting or censoring news that had the potential of damaging either ZANU PF's image or that of the country.

### **State media hail Chikane**

While the public media celebrated Kimberley Process monitor Abbey Chikane's alleged certification of Chiadzwa's diamonds, touted as a victory against the country's detractors, led by the West (ZTV, 7/6, 8pm & *The Herald* & *Sunday Mail*, 9 & 13/6), they censored global outrage against the move and evidence of corruption and human rights violations in Chiadzwa, which appeared in the private media. *The Zimbabwe Independent* (11/6) reported the MDC-T component of government protesting against its ZANU PF counterparts over a lack of transparency in Chiadzwa, while *NewsDay* (10/6) quoted domestic and international diamond watchdogs describing Chikane's verdict as a "sham", as it contradicted the situation on the ground.

### **Contemptuous Mutasa**

ZTV (7/6, 8pm) defended the comments of senior ZANU PF official, Didymus Mutasa, telling villagers occupying a white-owned tea and coffee estate in Chipinge to disregard a court ruling ordering them to vacate the farm. Instead of viewing Mutasa's actions as contemptuous of the court and having the potential to harm the inclusive government's credibility and incite a fresh wave of farm invasions, ZTV passively reported Mutasa as having justified his actions on the basis that the order was a product of **"some elements who are still bent on reversing the land reform programme"**.

### **Censored news**

- The government media censored the Public Service Commission's admission before the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Public Accounts that it had employed 10,277 unqualified ZANU PF youths from the National Youth Service (NYS) under unclear circumstances (*Financial Gazette ZimDaily*, 10 & 11/6).
- Calls by Home Affairs co-Minister Giles Mutsekwa for Zimbabweans to sue police officers who banned public gatherings, as they were in violation of the Constitution (*NewsDay*, 14/6).
- Mutsekwa's criticism of a senior ZANU PF official, Stan Mudhenge, for inciting political violence in Masvingo. This followed comments attributed to Mudhenge while addressing traditional leaders in Zimuto last month. He allegedly told them to remove from their jurisdiction **"any person that refused to support ZANU PF"**.

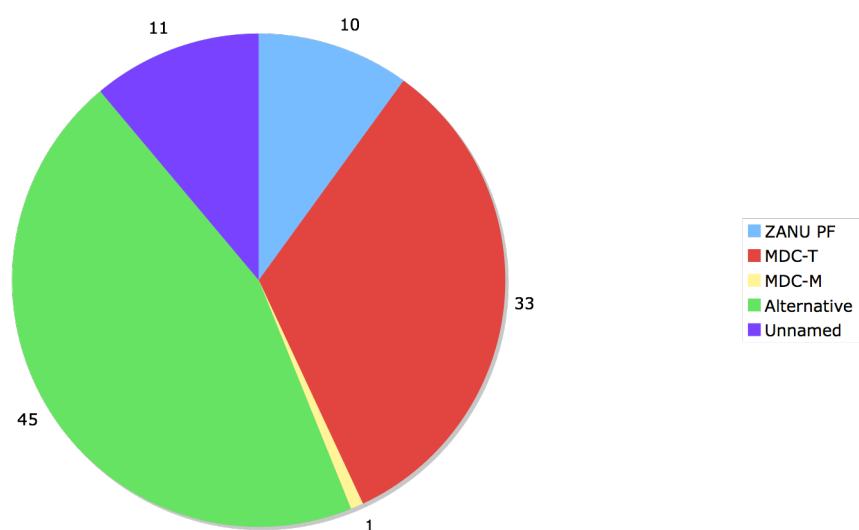
- Revelations by Center for Research and Development director Farai Maguwu that he believed Chikane had set him up (SW Radio Africa, *Zimbabwean On Sunday* & *The Standard*, 13/6). Maguwu's secret transfer from Harare remand prison to Harare central police station and, then, the notorious Matapi police station, which Maguwu's lawyer described as tantamount to kidnapping, was also censored by the government media (*The Standard*, 13/6).

## THE MOST POPULAR VOICES

THE state media's tendency to report important national issues from ZANU PF's perspective were again reflected by the extensive publicity they gave to ZANU PF voices. They were accessed 47 times, compared with 20 times for the MDC-T, four for MDC-M and 20 for alternative voices, almost exclusively ZANU PF sympathizers promoting the party's position on various national issues.

The private media committed the same offence on behalf of the MDC-T but also gave significant space to independent analysts and civic organizations to express their views on topical issues, such as constitutional reforms and problems affecting the inclusive government. They accessed MDC-T for comment on 33 occasions, ZANU PF (10), MDC-M just once, alternative voices 45 times and unnamed sources 11 times.

Voice distribution in the private media



Individually, COPAC co-chairman Paul Mangwana (ZANU PF) was most frequently quoted in the government media (14 times).

He was followed by counterpart Douglas Mwonzora (MDC-T), who was quoted eight times, Deputy Justice Minister Jessie Majome (six) and pro-ZANU PF analysts, Gabriel Chaibva and Maxwell Hove (five times each).

Mangwana and Mwonzora were heard expressing COPAC's readiness for the outreach programme and criticizing MPs for demanding more pay, while Majome urged the media to provide fair coverage to the constitutional reform exercise. Chaibva and Hove were quoted accusing the West of conspiring against Zimbabwe through the imposition of sanctions and attempting to block the sale of Chiadzwa diamonds.

KP monitor Abbey Chikane (eight) was most favoured in the private media.

He was followed by Minister of State in the Prime Minister's office Gordon Moyo (seven), Constitutional Affairs Minister Eric Matinenga (three). Mwonzora and Mangwana (twice each) completed the list.

Chikane was quoted as approving Chiadzwa diamonds, while Moyo criticized Charamba for persistently disrespecting Tsvangirai and his party. Matinenga, Mwonzora and Mangwana were giving updates on the constitutional reform programme.

## Human rights violations

THE government media censored ongoing incidents of rights abuses across the country in line with their thrust to conceal news that damaged the credibility of the inclusive government.

All 11 incidents that were recorded this week appeared in the private media.

They included:

- Prosecution of four senior MDC-T officials, two of them MPs Pishayi Muchauraya and Morgan Komichi, for insulting President Mugabe or undermining the authority of the police while addressing rallies (*NewsDay*, *Studio 7* & *ZimDaily* 7 & 8/6).
- Police ban on a planned meeting by former Nkayi North MP Abednico Bhebhe in Nkayi despite a High Court ruling permitting him to hold it and another ban on the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions' commemorations of the 1972 Hwange Colliery mine disaster (*ZimOnline* & *The Standard*, 6 & 13/6).
- Attacks on at least 16 white commercial farms by suspected ZANU PF supporters (*SW Radio Africa* & *ZimDaily*, 9 & 10/6).

## ***What they said...***

***They are in the communities where they are doing various work to help the youths and women, we have done a survey and I am glad to say they are doing community work*** – Public Service Commission Inspector-General Clifford Matorera justifying the bogus recruitment of “Border Gezi youths” into the civil service (*The Financial Gazette*, 10/6).

***“We are extremely concerned by the monitor’s report, which directly contradicts (the situation) on the ground...Lifting the ban on Marange exports would mean letting blood diamonds onto international markets”*** – international diamond watchdog Global Watch rejecting KP monitor Abbey Chikane’s certification of Chiadzwa’s controversial diamonds (*NewsDay*, 10/6).

***“There was a ruling in favour of our client (Chipinge white commercial farmer Brendon Scott) but unfortunately there is no assistance from the police to enforce that court order. There is disrespect for the court. They (ZANU PF side of government) only respect the court when they want to fix opponents or when they want to grab property”*** – lawyer Tinoziva Bere (*NewsDay*, 8/6).

Ends/

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