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**The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
Monday August 2nd - Sunday August 8th 2010
Weekly Media Review 2010-30**

Contents

1. The top stories
2. Missing stories
3. Most popular voices

The weeks' top stories

Harare City Council's defiance of a government directive to reduce salaries for council senior management added spice to an otherwise quiet week in which the government-controlled media flooded their audiences with news on Heroes' and Defence Forces' Day commemorations.

While the government media were engrossed in these festivities, they paid scant attention to warnings of imminent hunger in Zimbabwe and human rights violations, the majority of which were related to the Constitutional Parliamentary Committee (Copac)'s consultative programme.

Fig 1: Top stories in the media

Media	Heroes' Day	Municipal issues	Constitutional reforms	Food security	Human rights
Public Media	111	27	14	4	3
Private media	14	9	20	13	32
Total	125	36	34	17	32

Govt, Harare City Fathers cross swords over salaries

Clashes between government and the Harare City Council over alleged hefty salaries being paid to council executives, reported to be around \$20 000 per month, dominated the media's coverage of local government issues.

These comprised 17 (47%) of the media's 36 stories on the local government's operations.

Four were on a row between Harare Council Mayor Muchadeyi Masunda and Mashonaland Central Governor Martin Dinha over the governor's alleged resistance to the council's acquisition of 26 farms from his province for expansion purposes. The remaining 15 highlighted symptoms of poor service delivery by local government authorities around the country. These included shortages of safe drinking water, poor street lighting and bad state of roads, sporadic refuse collection and outbreak of water-borne diseases such as Typhoid.

Both the government and private media publicised the Harare Council's refusal to comply with the government directive on salary cuts as part of efforts to improve service delivery. They widely quoted Local Government Deputy Minister Sesel Zvidzai (head of a committee appointed by government to enforce the directive) ordering local authorities to comply with central government's policy stipulating that 70 percent of council revenue should go towards service delivery provision and the remainder to salaries (*NewsDay* & *The Zimbabwean* On Sunday, 22 & 25/7).

However, *The Herald* (3/8) quoted Masunda insisting that council would not slash the salaries as doing so was not only **"illegal"** but would also result in council losing its skilled workers. It quoted the mayor: **"The issue has been blown out of proportion. We will not trample on employee rights. We will not tamper with their packages."**

The paper also reported Masunda criticising Zvidzai, saying he was **"least qualified"** to enforce the government directive without elaboration. Neither was he asked to explain the purported illegality of the directive.

It was only at the end of the week that a *NewsDay* (6/8) story: *Govt wins salary war*, reported the Harare Council as having finally bowed down to government pressure to reduce the salaries following a meeting between Masunda and Zvidzai. However, it remained unclear how this was going to be achieved, especially in light of Masunda's vague insistence that council would **"continue paying its workers salaries guided by norms in the region"**.

Polarized coverage for Copac's outreach programme

All media failed to holistically measure progress of the constitutional reforms' consultative programme.

While the government-controlled media largely glossed over problems dogging the outreach exercise, the private media was mostly preoccupied with exposing ZANU PF and its allies as obstacles to the initiative.

Consequently, there was a dearth of information on the exact dates the consultative process would start in Harare and Bulawayo and when it would end. Further, there was no evaluation of the reasons and implications of the delays in holding the meetings and no assessment of Copac's preparedness, including the level of awareness of the exercise among residents of the two cities.

Eight (57%) of the government media's 14 reports on the topic gave the impression that the constitutional outreach programme was proceeding smoothly, three quoted Constitutional Affairs Minister Eric Matinenga refuting reports of violence during the exercise while the remaining three accused the MDC-T of attempting to derail it.

Although ZBC (6/8, 8pm) and *The Herald* (10/8) quoted Matinenga saying Copac had held at least 1 560 meetings between July 19 and July 31 that were attended by 288 951 people, they did not ask him for a provincial breakdown of the meetings and attendance levels. Neither did they quiz him on the successes of the meetings, given widespread reports of apathy in Matabeleland and high levels of intimidation in other provinces.

Similarly, Studio 7 (3/8) simply reported Matinenga as having said that 20 percent of the meetings had been held so far without asking him to elaborate on the matter.

ZBC (6/8, 8pm) & *The Herald* (10/8) passively quoted Matinenga urging civil society and the media to **“desist from peddling unsubstantiated allegations”** of intimidation and violence during the outreach programme. Apart from claiming that the exercise was **“progressing well”**, these media also reported Matinenga as having dismissed reports that ZBC had refused to publish Copac's publicity materials despite him being quoted last week (*NewsDay* 4/8) criticising the national broadcaster's stance, arguing that since the constitution-making exercise was **“a national programme”**, ZBC was **“obliged to support it”**.

The private media devoted more attention to highlighting incidents of intimidation and violence during the outreach process, most of which were allegedly perpetrated by ZANU PF and its allies. This was reflected in 10 of their 20 stories on the subject.

Three quoted Matinenga dismissing reports of violence during constitutional outreach consultations. The remaining seven assessed the Parliamentary- driven constitutional reforms, which they largely depicted as compromised and flawed. The *Zimbabwe Independent*, for instance, dismissed the Copac outreach programme as **“fraudulent”**, alleging it was designed to **“justify”** and promote political ideologies of the country's coalition parties.

Most popular voices

The government media gave reasonable coverage to ZANU PF and the two MDC formations, which were all quoted either paying tribute to Zimbabwe's liberation struggle as the country marked Heroes and Defence Forces' Days, or expressing their commitment to constitution making and the power-sharing imperative.

The private media paid more attention to MDC views than those from ZANU PF. The MDC was mostly recorded expressing concern over ZANU PF's reluctance to fulfil its obligations under the GPA.

Individually, President Mugabe was the most quoted voice in the public media (27), most of which stemmed from his national addresses during Heroes and Defence Forces Day commemorations. MDC-T spokesperson Nelson Chamisa (nine) came second, followed by US ambassador Charles Ray (five) and Foreign Affairs Minister Simbarashe Mumbengegwi (four).

Chamisa was heard pledging his party's respect for national institutions and events and urged Zimbabweans to participate in the constitutional reform programme. Mumbengegwi was quoted criticizing Western diplomats for their walkout from the National Heroes Acre after President Mugabe's vitriol against the West at the burial of her sister and national heroine, Sabina, while Ray was recorded defending the diplomats' action.

Copac co-chairman Douglas Mwonzora and Chamisa led the rankings in the private media (nine times each).

Mugabe (seven) and Constitutional Affairs Minister Eric Matinenga (five) followed. Mwonzora and Matinenga were cited defending constitutional reforms while Chamisa criticized ZANU PF for allegedly disrespecting its coalition partners. Mugabe was heard delivering national speeches on Heroes and Defence Forces' days.

Fig 2: Voice distribution in the media

Media	ZANU PF	MDC-T	MDC-M	Alternative	Local Govt	Foreign diplomats
Public Media	19	15	2	6	4	11
Private Media	10	29	5	37	4	16

Human rights abuses

The state-run media continued to grossly underreport rights violations in the country as exposed by the private media, which carried 32 reports on the matter compared to the official media's three.

All of the government media's reports on the subject were on the arrest of MDC-M official, Kudakwashe Munengiwa, for alleged "**public indecency**" at a Copac meeting in Mutare (Spot FM, 5/8, 8pm, *The Manica Post* & *The Herald*, 6/8).

The private media's reports on rights violations, consisting 22 incidents, were mostly on ZANU PF and state security agents' violence against ZANU PF's perceived opponents. Sixteen (73%) of these were connected to Copac's outreach programme.

These included:

- Alleged assault of a ZANU PF activist by three teachers and a security guard in Karoi during a constitutional outreach meeting (Studio 7 & SW Radio Africa, 2 & 3/8).
- Coercion of villagers to attend ZANU PF meetings in Headlands and intimidation of Bikita villagers by war veterans, reportedly led by Jabulani Sibanda (Studio 7, SW Radio Africa, *NewsDay* & *The Zimbabwean On Sunday*, 2, 3, 4 & 8/8).
- Alleged threats by soldiers against MDC-T official James Jonga at Murombedzi Growth Point after he reportedly defied their orders not to make contributions at a constitutional outreach meeting at the growth point (SW Radio Africa & *The Zimbabwean On Sunday*, 4 & 8/9).
- The alleged burning by suspected ZANU PF supporters of a home belonging to an MDC activist Titus Garura in Uzumba (SW Radio Africa, 4/8).
- Alleged attacks on two MDC-T officials and vehicles belonging to the party by ZANU PF youths and state security agents in Chipinge (*The Zimbabwean On Sunday*, 8/8).

Did you know...

- That President Mugabe and Parliament have powers to pass a draft constitution into law even if Zimbabweans have passed a “NO” vote in a referendum. According to constitutional law expert Greg Linnington, there is no legal requirement for people to approve the draft before it becomes law. What is only needed is a two-thirds majority vote by the House of Assembly (*NewsDay*, 3/8).
- That Zimbabwe’s endless power sharing dispute is on the agenda of the forthcoming SADC summit in Namibia. Senior SADC officials, including its executive secretary Tomaz Salomao, were quoted confirming this (*SW Radio Africa* and *The Zimbabwe Independent*, 6/8).
- That a World Food Programme (WFP) report indicates that at least 1,7 million Zimbabweans are facing starvation with close to 133 000 tonnes of food assistance needed (*Newsday*, 11/8) and;
- That Zimbabwe is intending to import 600 000 tonnes of maize from the region following a disappointing 2009/10 farming season. Reportedly, Zimbabwe has agreed a deal with the Malawian government to import 300 000 tonnes, a development confirmed by Malawi’s deputy agriculture minister, Margaret Mauwa (*NewsDay*, 5/8).

What they said...

“In our investigations, we have discovered that 80% of revenue that is collected by local council goes to salaries. This is a major challenge for us and we are going to look into the Labour Act before we cut salaries. But I can confirm now that the salaries will be cut” – Local Government Deputy Minister Sesel Zvidzai (*NewsDay* & *The Zimbabwean*, 22 & 25/7).

“We are saying no to issues driven by emotion. As a lawyer, I will not walk into a legal minefield” – Harare mayor Muchadeyi Masunda responding to a government directive to cut salaries for senior council management (*The Herald*, 3/8).

“There is lethargy when it comes to implementation (of the Global Political Agreement). Then there are toxic and corrosive issues such as the hateful jingles (ZANU PF propaganda songs) they continue to play and non-consultation on major issues” – MDC-T spokesman Nelson Chamisa accusing ZANU PF of intransigency (*The Standard*, 8/8).

Ends/

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