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**The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
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The week's top stories

The eventual auction of the first batch of Zimbabwe's controversial Chiadzwa diamonds despite protests by global civic organizations hogged the limelight in all media this week.

President Mugabe's visit to China, during which China reportedly extended further financial assistance to Zimbabwe, came a close second in the government-controlled media. However, while the government media attached significance to the trip, the private media paid more attention to the SADC summit in Namibia, especially on whether it would finally resolve Zimbabwe's protracted power-sharing dispute. The ongoing public consultation phase of the constitutional making process also remained a generally popular subject of debate in all the media: the private media outlets emphasized problems plaguing it, especially reports of violence and intimidation, while the official media dismissed these as a plot to discredit the exercise.

Fig 1: Top stories in the media

Media	Chiadzwa diamonds	Mugabe's visit to China	Constitutional reform	SADC summit	Human rights
State-run media	63	53	20	11	2
Private media	38	9	27	23	11
Total	101	62	47	34	13

Controversy dogs Chiadzwa diamonds auction proceeds

While all media publicized Zimbabwe's first official auction of its controversial Chiadzwa diamonds, confusion reigned over the exact revenue realized from the sale.

Although all the media initially reported the auction as having generated US\$72 million (13/8), they later reported Finance Minister Tendai Biti revising the figure to US\$45 million (Radio Zimbabwe, 13/8, 1pm & *The Standard*, 15/8). Studio 7 (13/8) added more confusion to the matter by reporting Biti as saying Zimbabwe **"will be lucky"** to get US\$15 million from the sale, an amount that *The Standard* later indicated was government's share of the auction's proceeds.

No other informative updates on the matter were given.

Further, it remained unclear why the auction covered only 900 000 carats of gems extracted by Mbada Diamonds and Canadile Miners between May 28, 2010 and September 1 this year. Neither did *The Herald* (12/8) explain why the country still required more KP Certification to sell the other **"three million carats"** that the two companies had earlier mined and why this had not yet been given.

The government media restricted themselves to giving the impression that the sale of diamonds would bring immediate relief to the Zimbabwean economy and represented a decisive defeat for those who opposed it. As a result, they downplayed the fact that some Western buyers had boycotted the sale.

The private media debated the matter more widely.

Apart from highlighting global criticism of the auction, they quoted economists such as Eric Bloch arguing that the money generated from the sale was not sufficient to significantly boost Zimbabwe's cash-strapped fiscus (Studio 7, 12/8). *The Zimbabwean On Sunday*, *ZimOnline* and Studio 7 (13 & 15/8) reported that a US-based global network of diamond buyers, Rapaport Diamond Network, had banned its members from trading in the Chiadzwa diamonds. These media quoted Rapaport Diamond Network arguing that although trading in Chiadzwa diamonds was now legal following their certification by the KP, anyone involved in them risked expulsion from the network and could face sanctions by the US and EU. The network cited alleged human rights violations in Chiadzwa as the major reason for its action.

Confusion over SADC summit outcome

The media gave conflicting versions of what transpired at the SADC summit in Namibia, where problems bedeviling Zimbabwe's power-sharing imperative was earmarked for discussion.

The government media depicted SADC as having commended Zimbabwe's coalition parties for working together to revive the country while the private media maintained that the regional grouping remained unimpressed by ZANU PF's reluctance to fully implement the Global Political Agreement (GPA).

For example, in its front page story *SADC hails Zim leaders*, *The Herald* (17/8) quoted both outgoing SADC chairman and DRC President Joseph Kabila, as well as his successor and President of Namibia, Hifikipunye Pohamba, praising Zimbabwe's coalition parties for setting aside their difference for nation building and South Africa for helping resolve the crisis. Earlier, ZBC (16/8, 8pm) reporter Judith Makwanya claimed: ***"The kudos to Zimbabwe's inclusive government came as a slap in the face of Western news agencies and online websites that went haywire over the past week claiming that Zimbabwe would top the agenda"***.

In contrast, *NewsDay* (17/8)'s front page lead, *Pressure mounts on Mugabe*, cited unnamed ***"impeccable"*** sources claiming the regional grouping had given Mugabe 30 days to resolve the power sharing dispute. The private daily also quoted the sources saying SADC had also ordered Zimbabwe's coalition parties to craft a roadmap leading to free and fair elections.

COPAC'S OUTREACH PROGRAMME FADES OUT

The media appeared to have lost interest in providing momentous discussions on the Constitutional Parliamentary Committee (Copac)'s outreach programme, as evidenced by their failure to provide informative updates on progress in the process.

Besides highlighting the violence/intimidation and logistical problems facing the exercise, including general calls for Zimbabweans to participate, there has been very little examination by the media on how the outreach meetings have turned out and when and where they have been held. For example, while Copac announced that it would hold meetings in 1 957 wards around the country when the consultative phase of constitution making began more than two months ago, Zimbabweans remain no wiser on how many of the wards have been covered.

Of the 20 reports that the government media carried on the constitutional reforms, five highlighted logistical and administrative problems affecting the exercise, two dismissed reports of violence and nine (45%) were mostly calls for Zimbabweans, especially women, to participate. The remaining four were on ZANU PF constitutional awareness meetings.

The bulk (17) of the private media's 27 stories on the subject highlighted incidents of human rights violations, all of which lacked corroboration. Five were on administrative problems and the remaining five were on calls for devolution of power.

The official media did not carry independent investigations into allegations that ZANU PF, war veterans and state security agents were intimidating Zimbabweans into supporting ZANU PF's stance on constitution revision. *The Herald* (14/8), for example, reported JOMIC officials Lovemore Matuke (ZANU PF) and Robson Mashiri (MDC-M) describing as **"unfounded"** reports of widespread violence in Bikita, Masvingo, after they allegedly visited the area to investigate the issue. It quoted Matuke accusing some unidentified political parties of peddling the falsehoods as a way of **"poisoning"** the outreach programme **"for their own parochial gains"**. However, the paper failed to correlate JOMIC's denial with Copac's acknowledgement of the violence, allegedly led by war veterans' leader Jabulani Sibanda, and the police's subsequent ban on meetings held by the war vet leader in the province (Studio 7, 11 & 13/8).

Most popular voices

ZANU PF remained the preferred news sources in the government media while the MDC-T equally enjoyed lavish publicity in the private media, reflecting the extent of polarization in the country's media.

The views of the smaller MDC formation remained marginalized in both media (See Fig. 2). Though the government media widely publicized the views of the international community and political commentators, the majority of these were reported commending progress in Zimbabwe and singling out Western sanctions as the stumbling block to economic revival, in line with ZANU PF opinion on the matter. The government media however, gave business significant space to express its views on various economic issues, including the significance of the auction of the Chiadzwa diamonds.

The private media widely quoted political commentators and the international community expressing mixed feelings over the sale of Chiadzwa gems and SADC's ability to tackle Zimbabwe's power-sharing crisis.

Mugabe was the most quoted individual in the official media.

He was quoted 40 times, commending cordial relations between Zimbabwe and China and delivering a speech at the SADC summit. Chinese President Hu Jintao came second (17 times), followed by South Africa's Mineral Resources Minister Susan Shabangu (16), Mines Minister Obert Mpofu (nine) and Finance Minister Tendai Biti (four). Hu Jintao was quoted praising "symbiotic" relations between Zimbabwe and China. Shabangu and Mpofu were quoted expressing joy over the sale of Chiadzwa diamonds while Biti gave "revised" revenue from the auction of the gems.

MDC-T spokesman Nelson Chamisa made the most noise in the private media (12 times). He was heard expressing his party's expectations of the SADC summit and blaming ZANU PF for the power-sharing deadlock. South Africa's Foreign Ministry official Ayanda Ntsaluba (nine), Biti and KP monitor Abbey Chikane (five times each) followed. Ntsaluba was quoted as saying his boss (SA President Jacob Zuma) would tell the SADC summit that there was progress in the implementation of Zimbabwe's power-sharing accord. Mpofu, Biti and Chikane were quoted speaking on the sale of Chiadzwa diamonds.

Fig 2: Voice distribution in the media

Media	ZANU PF	MDC-T	MDC-M	Alternative	Foreign diplomats	Business
Public media	42	22	2	19	38	20
Private media	29	60	5	55	20	6

Rights violations persist

While the government-controlled media continued to dismiss reports of human rights violations against a cross section of the Zimbabwean society, the private media publicized the matter.

This week they recorded 15 incidents, 14 (93%) of which emanated from the constitutional outreach exercise.

Among these were:

- The alleged burning of two homes belonging to MDC-T supporters in Bikita (SW Radio Africa & *NewsDay*, 9 & 10/8);
- The expulsion by ZANU PF supporters of some Karoi residents from a Copac meeting after they had allegedly expressed views contrary to those of ZANU PF, and coercion of people in Chegutu into supporting ZANU PF's position on constitution rewriting (Studio 7, 11 & 13/8);
- Alleged abduction of a senior MDC-T official, Naison Mlambo, by ZANU PF supporters in Chipinge (*New Zimbabwe.com*, 9/8), and;
- The banning by police of an MDC-T constitution awareness meeting in the Midlands Province and the arrest of MDC activist Chakanetsa Muvenga in Mt Darwin for allegedly undermining President Mugabe during a constitutional outreach meeting (SW Radio Africa, 12/8).

What they said...

“Tsvangirai is just like a fly in a kombi or bus. The fly can sit on the driver’s seat but that does not make it the one in charge of the bus. He can be eliminated in the political set up anytime and life will go on” – War veterans’ leader Jabulani Sibanda addressing ZANU PF supporters in Bikita, Masvingo (*NewsDay* & SW Radio Africa, 10/8).

“We need to be realistic and not promise Zimbabweans the earth. Estimates of billions being raised today are exaggerated. This auction will certainly help the country’s fiscus, but it won’t solve all Zimbabwe’s problems” – Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai speaking during the auction of Chiadzwa diamonds (*New Zimbabwe.com*, 12/8).

“We don’t expect any major development from the SADC summit, SADC is busy pre-occupied with other important issues from the region. They will not spend much time discussing the Zimbabwe issue, because there are other important issues” - ZANU PF spokesman Rugare Gumbo expressing his party’s expectation of the SADC summit (*ZimOnline*, 13/8).

Ends/

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