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**The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
Monday August 30th – Sunday September 5th 2010
Weekly Media Review 2010-34**

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Top stories of the week

The visit by international music icons – US-based R&B singer Akon and his Jamaican Ragga counterpart, Sean Paul – as part of government efforts to rebrand the country's battered image, hogged media limelight at the end of the week. But it was the crisis-ridden Constitutional Parliamentary Committee (Copac)'s consultation programme, bedevilled by funding and operational problems, which still received most publicity in both the government and private media during the week.

Poor service delivery, especially by local government authorities and state-run companies, attracted significant media attention too. Fig. 1 illustrates this.

Fig 1: Top stories in the media

Media	Akon/Sean Paul musical show	Constitutional reforms	Poor service delivery	Labour unrest	Human rights
Public Media	22	30	26	7	2
Private Media	19	24	14	3	21
Total	41	54	40	10	23

Problems mount on Copac's outreach programme

News of the alleged reluctance by donors to fund the additional 25 days of the constitutional outreach programme marked the latest controversy to dog Zimbabwe's constitution-making process in the week.

But the media inadequately handled this development by largely failing to shine light on why the donors had rebuffed financing the extension of the exercise. Neither did they clear the confusion over the real reasons behind the extension given Copac's controversial announcement in the week that it had allocated only two days for the outreach exercise in Harare and Bulawayo after initially giving the impression that the additional 25 days were mainly to accommodate the outreach programme in the two cities.

Only *ZimOnline* (2/9) questioned the rationality of setting aside only two days (September 18 and 19) for the consultation exercise for Harare and Bulawayo, arguing that the two cities required more time as they had **"the highest population densities"**.

Confusion also reigned over how the outreach programme would proceed without donor support and whether Copac's plans to reduce the 25-day extension of the exercise to 15 (*ZimOnline*, 2/9) would alleviate the funding problems and still ensure a successful completion of the exercise.

NewsDay (1/9) reported government and Copac officials alleging that donors, including the United Nations Development Programme, had told them during a meeting on Monday 30 September not to look for funding from the West without elaborating. Instead, the donors were alleged to have scornfully urged government to ask for the funds from ZANU PF's Eastern allies, Russia and China, in line with the party's Look East Policy. No comment from the donors was sought.

The Sunday Mail (5/9) expanded on the *NewsDay*'s report, blaming an unnamed Usaid official for the **"scathing attack"** on the constitution-making exercise, a development which reportedly prompted the US Embassy to apologize to government over the matter. However the story, based on the comments of ZANU PF Copac Co-chair Paul Mangwana and an unidentified source also did not explain why the donors – who are still bankrolling other phases of constitutional reforms – were not happy with funding the extension of the exercise's consultative stage. Neither did they give the donors and the US Embassy the right of reply.

While the *Daily News* (4/9) quoted Mangwana disclosing that more than 560 000 people had so far participated in the outreach programme, 91 000 of which were from Manicaland, the online agency did not ask him to provide a provincial breakdown of how the programme had progressed.

These stories formed part of the 24 reports that the media [government media (eight) and private media (16)] devoted to logistical and administrative problems facing constitutional reforms.

The media allocated six other stories to expectations by special interest groups in the new constitution (government media [four] and private media [two]). Fifteen were on the constitutional campaign activities of ZANU PF, ZAPU and the two MDC formations, 11 of which appeared in the public media and four in the private media.

The remaining nine stories were on rights violations plaguing the exercise (government media [six] and private media [three]).

Media mum on massive telecommunications disruption puzzle

Although the media continued to highlight symptoms of poor service delivery, mostly by local government authorities and state enterprises, they paid scant attention to the disruption of mobile telecommunication services, especially by Zimbabwe's largest cellular service provider, Econet Wireless, at the weekend.

None of the government media's news reports on poor service delivery publicized this matter. Twenty (77%) of their stories focused on poor service provision by municipalities and parastatals while the remaining 10 were on power struggles between the ZANU PF arm of government and the MDC T-led Harare City Council.

The private media adopted a similar pattern.

Eight (57%) of their 14 stories fingered councils and state-run companies for their poor service delivery. Five (36%) highlighted power struggles between ZANU PF and the Harare City Council. Only one story, which appeared in *The Standard* (5/9), reported on the transmission problems at Econet since Friday September 3, which reportedly made it almost impossible for subscribers of the mobile phone operator to make calls and send messages.

However, the paper failed to extract a convincing explanation from Econet on the causes of the problem. Neither did it clarify if the connection difficulties also affected the country's other two mobile phone operators, Telecel Zimbabwe and the state-run Net One.

The Standard simply quoted Econet's corporate communications manager, Rangarirai Mberi, speculating that the disruption could have been caused either by the company's transmission network "**challenges**" or "**power outages at our base stations**".

The government media did not even include this development in its news content. *The Sunday Mail* (5/9) simply carried a Press statement from Econet also blaming the communications problems to "**challenges on its transmission network**" without elaborating.

The government media and private papers highlighted symptoms of poor service delivery such as persistent water and power cuts and uncollected refuse in cities such as Harare, Bulawayo and Masvingo, but differed on the cause of the problem.

While the government media mostly projected failure to provide decent service delivery by these municipalities to incompetence and huge salary bills for senior management, especially in the case of Harare, the private Press presented it as stemming from ZANU PF interference and inadequate funding of council operations.

The private electronic media ignored these issues.

The media's loudest voices

ZANU PF voices flooded the official media, exposing these media's habit of interpreting Zimbabwe's socio-political and economic issues from ZANU PF's perspective. The private media exhibited the same bias, reporting national issues through the eyes of the MDC-T.

The government media also gave prominent publicity to ordinary Zimbabweans, mostly Harare residents, complaining about poor service provision. Although local authorities were also given the opportunity to defend themselves, their opinions were generally drowned in accusations of corruption and incompetence levelled against them by Local Government Minister Ignatius Chombo and residents. Most of the MDC-M voices carried in the private media mostly appeared complaining about ZANU PF's refusal to accord its late vice president, Gibson Sibanda, national hero status.

Individually, President Robert Mugabe was the most quoted in the official media. He was heard 32 times, mostly speaking about the Comesa summit in Swaziland.

Constitutional Affairs Minister Eric Matinenga and ZANU PF Copac Co-chair Paul Mangwana (six times each) and MDC-M Copac Co-chairman Edward Mkhosi (four) trailed. They were mostly quoted commenting about problems bedevilling the outreach programme, especially the reluctance by donors to fund its extension.

Matinenga and MDC-T Copac Co-chairman Douglas Mwonzora (six times each) and MDC-T spokesman Nelson Chamisa and Mkhosi (five apiece) were popular voices in the private media. Matinenga, Mwonzora, Mkhosi and Chamisa were recorded raising concern about persistent problems affecting constitutional reforms, particularly inadequate funding.

These were followed by Matinenga who was quoted four times criticizing donors for allegedly refusing to fund the constitutional reforms.

Fig 2: Sourcing patterns in the media

Media	ZANU PF	MDC-T	MDC-M	Alternative	Local government	Ordinary people
Public media	60	20	3	22	16	25
Private media	11	38	10	26	8	6

Human rights abuses

The media recorded 11 incidents of human rights violations. Seven (64%) of these were related to Copac's outreach programme. Two appeared in the government media, both of which blamed the MDC-T for disrupting outreach meetings in Masvingo and Manicaland. The remaining five featured in the private media. All of them fingered ZANU PF as the perpetrators of the rights abuses.

Among the incidents were:

- The abandonment of two Copac meetings in Masvingo Urban after Copac officials allegedly manhandled each other following a dispute over consultation procedures (*The Herald*, 31/8 & ZTV 31/9, 7am);
- Alleged disruption of two outreach meetings in Nyanga by MDC-T legislators, Makoni South MP Pishai Muchauraya and Nyanga-Mutasa Senator Patrick Chitaka (*The Herald & The Manica Post*, 3/9);
- Alleged disruption of two outreach meetings by ZANU PF supporters in Kadoma and Nyanga South (Studio 7 & *Zimbabwean On Sunday*, 1 & 5/9); and
- Alleged assault of Chiredzi district lands officer Jacobs Chimoto, district administrator Makepeace Muzenda and 10 members of the district lands committee by illegal settlers they were trying to evict from Nuanetsi Ranch in Chiredzi (*The Herald & Daily News*, 31/8 & *NewsDay*, 3/9).

What they said...

"We perceive sanctions as the singular most dangerous overt threat to our national security and state of preparedness..." – Mbada Diamonds Chairman Robert Mhlanga speaking at the 2010 President's Medal Shooting Award ceremony in Harare (*The Herald*, 6/9).

"This country was not built by donors. We will find a way of financing the constitution. If the worst comes to the worst we will sell our diamonds..." – ZANU PF Copac Co-chairman Paul Mangwana (*NewsDay*, 1/9).

"As I speak right now everything is effected – all court orders are being implemented, work is being done as the country moves forward. We are doing our job ... The ZRP is doing what it was mandated to do" – MDC-T Home Affairs Co-Minister Theresa Makone claiming that Zimbabwean police were no longer partisan in their duties (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 3/9).

"The media have taken a deliberate policy for political reasons or otherwise to hate Copac. You just hate Copac; maybe you wanted to write the constitution yourself, because I can't understand you. Either you are insulting us, denigrating us or you will simply decide not to do anything if we have done a good thing" – ZANU PF Copac Co-chairman Pau Mangwana accusing the media of bias (*Daily News*, 4/9).

Ends.

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