

ZANU PF SUPPORTERS DISRUPT COPAC OUTREACH MEETINGS IN HARARE & CHITUNGWIZA

Supporters hired from peri-urban and surrounding farms



Serving Communities

REPORT ON THE HARARE AND CHITUNGWIZA COPAC OUTREACH MEETINGS ON THE NEW CONSTITUTION

Prepared by:

*Secretariat
Centre for Community Development In Zimbabwe
220 Samora Machel Ave*

Eastlea

Harare

*E-mail: **centrefordevelopment@gmail.com**
reception@ccdz.co.zw*

or

INTRODUCTION

The Centre for Community Development In Zimbabwe (C.C.D.Z) dispatched a team of monitors to observe the COPAC outreach meetings in Harare and Chitungwiza on the 18th and 19th September, 2010.

The COPAC meetings were plagued by disturbances caused mainly by ZANU PF elements who were hired from the peri-urban and farming areas surrounding Harare and Chitungwiza. In Chitungwiza, the Zanu PF activists threatened violence if COPAC allowed MDC “sellouts” to contribute. In the northern suburbs, the rowdy elements disrupted the constitutional outreach meetings and barred white Zimbabwean citizens and other neutrals in the northern suburbs from freely contributing their views to COPAC. Most of the ZANU PF thugs had been hired specifically to disrupt COPAC meetings and stop people from contributing their views.

Below is what CCDZ observed;

SEKE 1 HIGH SCHOOL, CHITUNGWIZA 18-09-10

The COPAC public consultation held at Seke 1 High in Chitungwiza was attended by approximately 450 participants. Of the participants, approximately 55% were female. The environment was very tense with threats of violence being issued between participants of different political parties at the start of the meeting. The meeting was attended by predominantly ZANU PF supporters who were rowdy and looking dangerous. Most of the female participants

were vendors who had been ordered to close shop and attend the meeting by ZANU PF supporters. Some participants had been allegedly transported from the farming areas to attend the meeting. A fight erupted during the meeting when one participant said he was advocated for the inclusion of dual citizenship in the new constitution. Apparently, some participants were against this and accused the COPAC facilitator of being biased and only asking MDC supporters to participate. This led to ZANU PF supporters attacking the COPAC facilitator. Most participants, scared of a battle, fled from the venue and the police had to threaten participants with arrest if they intimidated other participants.

Participants voiced differing opinions on what they think should be included in the new constitution. On the issue of Independent Commissions, most participants felt that the commissions should be elected by an ***“executive president.”*** Participants also were of the view that the preamble should refer to the ***“blood of the gallant sons and daughters of Zimbabwe that was shed during the liberation war and that Zimbabwe was freed by blood.”*** Another participant felt that writing a new constitution was worthless because ***“only one man is the leader of the country of Zimbabwe and if people do not take heed, then they will suffer same fate as others who dared to stand up to the President during the run-up to the June 2008 run-off elections.”***

MABVUKU HALL, HARARE 18-09-10

The meeting started at 10am at Mabvuku Hall in Mabvuku with an approximate attendance of 400 participants (50% being women and 45% male). There was a low turnout of youths, who comprised only 5%. Participation was high although some people could be seen to be dominating the meeting and some were only there to applaud and ululate but did not air out their views.

During the meeting, it could be noted that participants provided inadequate answers to some

questions which was a clear indication that they had been told or “coached” on what to say and did not know where the answers applied. At one point, the meeting was almost disrupted as people disputed over the issue of citizenship as some said they do not want dual citizenship and others articulated that dual citizenship is good for them. The meeting took a very long time to conclude which resulted in a number of people leaving and not expressing their views on some questions. Most participants said that they want, ***“Unitary government and did not want devolved or federal government but wanted all powers to be vested in central government; and an Executive President to hold all the administrative and political power”***.

It could be noted that, whenever there was a question on how ministers are put into office, or should there be Members of Parliament appointed or how judges should be appointed as well as ***the Attorney General, Auditor and Comptroller General and the Public Protector or Ombudsman*** should be appointed the answer would be, ***“Executive President”***. Most participants were of the view that the Constitution should not allow for dual citizenship and the general consensus was that foreign women should, ***“should only be given citizenship after bearing 10-15 children”***. Such responses showed that participants did not want dual citizenship. The ZANU PF crowd also wanted war veterans to be awarded money to support themselves and their families, ***“War veterans fought for this country, therefore they should be awarded with money and land take care of themselves and their families”***. However, some neutrals were of the view that these war veterans have benefited much, and should only be respected for the work that they have done of freeing Zimbabwe from colonialism.

UNIT L CHITUNGWIZA COMMUNITY HALL 18-09-10

The COPAC team arrived late at around 11:30 am. The meeting was attended by close to 400 people but the majority left after being intimidated by ZANU PF. A white T-35 truck with foreign plates was spotted at Unit L Chitungwiza Community hall dropping hordes of people who were

bused reportedly from the nearby farms in Chitungwiza to attend the outreach meeting. The crowd was rowdy, threatening to disrupt the COPAC outreach meeting if MDC supporters were allowed to contribute and “sale the country. Before the meeting started, the bused crowd threatened to beat up and eject from the meeting all those who did not support their viewpoints. They were heard saying: ***“Nyika ino inonzi Zimbabwe yakauya neropa. We will not allow our country to go back to Rhodesia.”***

When COPAC team members asked anyone from the crowd to start the proceedings with a prayer, a ZANU PF supporter stood up and gave a blasphemous prayer urging God to “to end the lives of those that call for sanctions”. Through the prayer, the ZANU PF activist attacked people who hold contrary views to land reform and said the bones of Mbuya Nehanda shall turn against them. The prayer upset some ordinary people who had come to participate freely and give their views to COPAC. Fearing for their lives, the ordinary people started streaming out of Unit L Community Hall. Only a few brave participants stayed and contributed to COPAC process. They spoke about devolution of powers, women’s rights, social and economic rights, independent commissions among other things, separation of powers among other.

The ZANU PF supporters advocated for the following positions on almost every talking point/thematic issue: ***“The Executive President”, “His Excellency, Commander-in-Chief of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces”, “Independent Commissions appointed by the Executive President”, “No to Land Audit”, “Those who call for sanctions must be executed”, “Only 1 president, his 2 deputies and no Prime Minister and or Deputies”, “Public protector/Ombudsperson, Attorney-General and Central bank Governor all appointed by the Executive President.”***

FUNDO PRIMARY SCHOOL, KUWADZANA 19-09-10

CCDZ also monitored a COPAC outreach meeting held at Fundo Primary School in Kuwadzana, Harare on the 19th of September 2010. The meeting was attended by approximately 150 participants from the area, and women constituted approximately 49% of the participants. The meeting was relatively peaceful and participants were able to air their views. However, a row ensued when one participant said that, war veterans should not play partisan politics. War veterans were against this and started to make noise claiming that by virtue of participating in the liberation struggle, they are politicians. The police, who were seated far off, realizing that a fight was about to erupt, rushed to the scene and when they tried to take the ZANU PF activists away, participants from the ZANU PF party began to chant slogans, advocating for the release of the participant and they threatened that if he was not released, they would stop the meeting. CCDZ noted that most of the participants from ZANU PF were not from the area and had been at the meeting place long before the meeting had even started.

During the meeting, participants raised concerns over the issue of media freedom and called for the new constitution to ban ***“all journalists and broadcasting houses that ridicule the President and allow only The Herald and ZBC to broadcast news to Zimbabweans.”*** Participants were also of the opinion that ***“homosexuality should not be allowed in the new constitution.”*** Other issues that were raised included the need for the new constitution to allow only for the ***“Office of the President and abolish the office of the Prime Minister.”*** Participants were also of the view that the ***“judiciary should be appointed by an Executive President, who should also appoint commissioners to different commissions.”*** On the issue of land, participants voiced the fact that the land belongs to the government and ***“no-one should have title deeds, everyone who owns land should have 99-year leases”.***

MT PLEASANT HALL, 19-09-10

Approximately 300 people attended the meeting and 50% were male and 40% female and the remaining 10% were the youths. The outreach meeting was held in a peaceful manner although

at some instances participants were chased out of the meeting after failing to adhere to ground rules that had been set by COPAC team members. Participants agreed that Social and Economic Rights should be included in the new constitution. They specifically advocated for the inclusion of the right to health, education, food, and shelter in the new Constitution.

Most women advocated for the respect and recognition of women's rights, however it was showing to ear some of the women saying, ***"We want seats reserved for the disabled, traditional leaders but not women and special interest groups"***. Most participants were of the view that youths should range from the age of 15 to 35 years of age and should be allowed to participate in politics as well as access land to alleviate their lives. Participants advocated for media freedom and spoke against ZANU PF's monopoly. Some participants said, ***"We don't want out of Zimbabwe broadcasters, we don't want Studio 7"***. A small number of participants said they want devolution, the majority of them said that they want the unitary system of government. Most participants said that they want an, ***"Executive President"*** only with a few saying, both, the President and the Prime Minister. Another participant, on the issue of traditional leaders said, ***"We want traditional leaders to have power to distribute land and have more power than District Administrators and we want them to be appointed by the Executive President"***

KUWADZANA COMMUNITY HALL 19-09-10

The meeting at Kuwadzana Community Hall started on time. There were reports that ZANU PF bused people from Norton to participate in the COPAC outreach programme. The Member of Parliament for Kuwadzana East, Hon Nelson Chamisa was observing the proceedings at Kuwadzana Community Hall. There was a lively debate from both the MDC and ZANU PF. Hon Chamisa told CCDZ Director Phillip Pasirayi that if it were not that ZANU PF had bused in people from other areas, the COPAC outreach meeting would have proceeded smoothly without any hiccups.

Both camps were vocal, trying to outwit each other in making contributions to COPAC. It was clear as the outreach meeting progressed that each camp had its spokespersons that always made contributions on the talking points. It was difficult to discern those views made by the neutrals but the ZANU PF and MDC camps stood out. ***Some rowdy ZANU PF youths who were allegedly hired from Norton were vociferous about an Executive President with 2 deputies with wide discretionary powers to make appointments to key government positions such as Attorney-General, Governor of Central bank, Auditor and Comptroller General, Governors and Ministers.***

TAFARA HALL 18-09-10

The meeting started at exactly 10 am with approximately 500 participants, 40% women and 50% and 10% youth, participation was generally high but it could be noted that some people dominated the meeting. People were in disagreement on who is supposed to participate in the process as some of the participants who were in the hall were outsiders. Participants were not agreed on citizenship as one group preferred mono-citizenship, ***“We don’t want foreigners here”***. The other participants said they wanted dual citizenship.

LEWISAM SCHOOL 19-09-10

ZANU PF militias who we believe had been bused to Lewisam tried to cause commotion. Many participants said the president should have superior powers to choose Commissioners in any commission set up by government and that Parliament should not have any role. The rented crowd at Lewisam said that President Mugabe should remain as ***“Commander-in-Chief of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces”***.

There was also an uproar when a white Zimbabwean was about to contribute his views on the question of the media. These ZANU PF party members argued that white people had no right to

contribute to discussions on the new constitution.

On the land question, one group preferred 99 year leases and the other group preferred title deeds. Those who preferred 99 year leases were of the opinion that the government should remain in control and if one is to have title deeds he/she will sell the land to white commercial farmers. A small number of participants said they want a devolved type of government and ZANU PF supporters said that want the unitary system of government.

CONCLUSION

Whilst it is everyone's right to participate in the Constitution-making process, it is wrong for ZANU PF to deny other people an opportunity to give their views to COPAC. The Centre for Community Development condemns the behavior of some misguided elements who think that the new Constitution should only reflect the views of one political party. We urge the principals in the GNU to re-commit themselves to a people-driven Constitution-making process where all citizens regardless of race, gender, sex, political or religious affiliation are afforded an opportunity to give their views on what should be included in the new Constitution.

CCDZ is also disturbed by the levels of impunity and police failure to rein in these unruly ZANU PF elements. As COPAC meetings were disrupted, ZRP officers watched from the sidelines without arresting these unruly elements who were disrupting a crucial national process.