

TALKING HARARE

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Minister Shamu, community radio initiatives meet

By Talking Harare Reporter

Community radio initiatives in Zimbabwe and the Minister of Media, Information and Publicity, Webster Shamu, met in Harare on 19 August 2009 and held consultations to discuss issues that are of concern with respect to the issue of community broadcasting licencing.

The meeting was held at the invitation of Minister Shamu who said community radios could play an important role in the transformation of the society. "The government is in the process of seeing what can be done to satisfy the needs of our nation in terms of information, education and entertainment needs. Community radios can assist us in making sure that we are a successful nation and so today we have invited community radio initiatives as a special group of the media and see how we can move forward for the better of our country," said the Minister in his opening remarks.

Chairperson of Zimbabwe Association of Community Radio Stations (ZACRAS), Chris Mhike, told Minister Shamu that many community radio initiatives were prepared to broadcast but the issue of licencing was impacting negatively on them. "Community radio initiatives represented here are prepared to broadcast once they get broadcasting licences and so the government should urgently assist them. We are concerned that the national broadcaster, ZBC, reaches only 20% of the national population and therefore feel that community radios can fill in that gap and ensure that there is free flow of information to all the people of Zimbabwe," said Mhike.

Besnath Dube of Hwange Community Radio who attended the meeting said it was good that the government has recognized the existence of community radio initiatives in the country. "We are happy that the government has recognized our existence and this invitation that they extended to us is testimony that things might be turning and we are sure we will get licences once BAZ is constituted as the minister promised," commended Dube.

Other issues that were discussed include that of ensuring that all parts of the country have a community radio, the need to do a needs assessment in areas that community radios want to operate and also that these radio initiatives should wait for the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) to invite them to submit applications as BAZ is already working towards that.

Community radio initiatives that attended the meeting include those from Harare, Bulawayo, Mutare, Hwange, Masvingo, Kwekwe, Kadoma and Gweru.

Zimbabwean media laws allow for the granting of licences to private players but to date no one has been licenced with the state-run ZBC being the country's sole broadcaster. However of late things seem to be changing as the government has announced plans to allow private and community broadcasters to operate and Minister Shamu's meeting with community radio initiatives can be seen as a positive step towards media diversity and development in the country.

Editorial Comment

Nip swine flue in the bug

By Givemore Chipere

The first confirmed cases of swine flue outbreak in the country that were recently reported are of great concern as they come hard on the heels of a cholera outbreak that claimed thousands of lives.

This disease require that we all work together from family, community and national level to ensure that we deal with it in such a way that it will not claim lives.

It is therefore crucial that government hospitals and local authority clinics should be urgently equipped with medicines and equipment necessary to combat this deadly disease should it be reported in Harare and any other part of the country. Government and health authorities should avoid becoming too dismissive of any suspected cases of swine flue cases. They must ensure that every case is treated with caution. As people we should not live in self denial and along the way lose unnecessary lives as happened during the first cholera outbreak last year in August.

It is also important that the Harare city council and all other local authorities should ensure that medicines for treating swine flue are provided at all council clinics. In particular Harare city council must ensure that some of the money it is currently demanding from residents is set aside specifically to control and fight swine flue. We should not wait for lives to be lost and then react to the situation.

We also hope that the statements made by the Ministry of Health of Child Welfare that drugs for the treatment of probable and confirmed cases have been pre-positioned at all district, central, provincial and municipal clinics are true.

Furthermore, it would not be of good interest to the public to hear that the government has fired striking doctors because we greatly need the services of such health personnel especially at this time when we are threatened by this deadly swine flue. Government should rather engage these doctors and see how they can together work for the good of people's health. Infact we should do away with this populist syndrome of making unilateral decisions that are retrogressive to the country.

Swine flue is an influenza AH1N1 virus that manifests itself through severe headaches, fevers of above 38 degrees Celsius, chills, severe coughs, sore throats, shortness of breath, fatigue and possible pneumonia.

The virus has spread across the world since emerging in Mexico and is now officially the first flu pandemic for 40 years. Zimbabwe reported its first five cases of the virus on Thursday, August 20. It is feared that the disease may lead to the loss of many lives if not tightly monitored and controlled.

Tips on swine Flu

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.

Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.

- Wash your hands often with soap water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-hand cleaners are also effective.

- Avoid touching yours eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.

- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

- Influenza is thought to spread mainly from person through coughing or sneezing of

infected people.

- If you get sick, it is recommended that you stay away from work or school and limit contact

with others to avoid infecting them.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

No need for posh cars

Editor- I do not see the reason why the Harare city council should buy the mayor an expensive Benz when the same local authority cannot provide us with drinking water here in Hatcliffe.

Even the bad situation in our road infrastructure does not concern our council and what they only want are luxuries paid from our paltry salaries. The numerous accidents that have occurred in Harare due to the poor states of our roads do not propel our council leaders to act and serve lives and property. For example, many deaths have been recorded as a result of accidents along Seke, Simon Mazorodze and Samora Machel roads. Hatcliffe, Mabvuku and Glen Norah are still facing water problems, burst sewer pipes are again still the order of the day in Harare and yet the council remains quiet only to announce they will buy a vehicle worth US\$150 000 for the mayor?

I have come to the conclusion that the reason why Harare is in such a bad state is because many of these people we elect to represent us at council level are mere fortune seekers. They are not different from the appointed commissioners that previously worsened the situation.

I also think that in future we should consider having a mayor who is a permanent resident in high density areas like Hatcliffe, Mbare, Kuwadzana or Dzivarasekwa so that he/she can feel how it is like to have sewage as your guest at home. **J. Nyandoro, Hatcliffe**

Editor – It is unfortunate that central government is supporting the purchase of an expensive vehicle for the mayor when all is not well in the city. We would have expected council to use such a huge amount of money in improving service delivery.

I thought the role of central government was to ensure that local authorities always act in the best interest of communities. **Miriam Moyo, Harare Poly**

Good to buy Mayor's car but

Editor-The decision by council to buy what they call an ML CDI Mercedes Benz for the His worship was a good move but only implemented at a wrong time. As the face of the city, the mayor should have a good car but such a car could have been bought when council has had a sound financial base.

I understand that at the moment council has got not enough money to even supply its residents with enough bins to put litter and these are the basics that the council should provide before they decide to buy such a car for the mayor. **Tendai Mahaka, Harare**

Mayor deserves the car

Editor- I am surprised to hear some people complaining about the mayor's vehicle saying that it is too expensive and so fourth. I think the mayor deserves such a car given the fact that he is the head of the city.

I am taken aback by many negative comments being made against the mayor and what surprises me most is that all these people now complaining never did so when the unelected Sekesai Makwavarara bought expensive curtains for her own personal use at the expense of ratepayers. Makwavarara's commission presided over the total collapse of our sunshine city but was not tormented for its extravagance.

But to be honest with each other, Mayor Masunda has worked hard to ensure that our city becomes a better place to live. For example, water is beginning to trickle back in areas that had gone dry for years such as Mabvuku and Tafara. City roads are also being repaired and I think these are all positive developments for our community and these should be commended.

T.K, Tafara

Harare City Council must respect residents

Editor- May the Harare City Council tell us what they are doing in the city centre because it is inconveniencing the people. Everytime we see long, deep and dangerous trenches being dug and it looks like the council is oblivious of the dangers that these trenches pose to pedestrians and motorists. To begin with, there are no signs to warn people that there are dangerous trenches ahead and there are no notices put up in the media or other strategic areas in the city to inform the public.

I think people will agree with me that these trenches are causing unnecessary problems to the people because they are also taking long to be closed. I do not think there is any reason why council should dig long trenches and then take long to put the pipes. Why not dig a short trench, fill it and then move forward?

Of course, it is good that council is doing a wonderful job in repairing old pipes but what we need to see whenever council is doing these repairs is informing the public about any impending repairs that inconvenience the public. Such public information should be broadcast on local radio and television as well as newspapers. ***Concerned resident, Avenues***

What is happening with the constitutional reform exercise?

Editor- It is a pity that there appears to be a plan to delay the constitution making process. The last time we heard about it was when a violent conference was held in Harare and thereafter there has been a confusing silence. Whoever is responsible for speaking about this process should make it a habit to tell the public how far this process has gone.

To me, it appears there is a deliberate ploy by some sections of our community to drag the nation from coming up with a people driven constitution.

I do not understand why the process is now taking longer than the aligned time for each stage. Of great surprise is also how Zimbabweans have kept quiet about this process, we have not demanded to know what is actually happening about the new constitution. It is high time Zimbabweans open their eyes widely and be able to analyze situations. The people had shown great zeal about this issue and now everything is just fizzling out.

Agnes Muvavarirwa, Marimba

Lets us all be progressive

Editor- I am surprised that there are constant arrests of parliamentarians from only one political party. I smell a rat here. If the Government of National Unity (GNU) is really working, I do not think these arrests would have been taking place because most of the charges against these MPs appear to be driven by politics.

These kind of arrests will not take us anywhere serve to bring us back to the periods of yesteryears when we became a country of political violence, coercion and poverty.

Rutendo, Kuwadzana Extension

Organisers disappointed us

Editor- As a resident of Tafara I would like to express how we were bewildered by the outcome of a well planned clean up campaign which was said to have been planned by the Ministry of Youth.

The campaign was targeted to clean all the rubbish in the area which has greatly been caused by the dilapidated waste management system in our city. Invitation letters were given a day before the clean up and many residents including those from Caledonia farm were invited. All participants were promised jobs and a token of appreciation ranging from US\$20-35.

The campaign took 4 days and on the last day we waited anxiously to receive the money we had been promised only to discover that we had been juped as nothing came. ***S. Maso, Tafara***

Mayor's statement over Merc irks residents

Editor - The Combined Harare Residents Association (CHRA) is disappointed by mayor Muchadeyi Masunda defensive statements on council's acquisition of a high-profit and expensive Mercedes Benz for him.

The mayor's statement have done nothing except to provoke the anger of the ratepayers who are failing to put food on their tables because most of their earnings are going to the city's treasury and yet little is being done to improve service delivery.

The mayor's arguments that the car was budgeted for and that it is council property do not hold water. Residents are not concerned about what has, and has not been budgeted for, but what they want is to see their hard-earned money being put to good use.

Furthermore, when the City of Harare announced its 2009 budget, nothing was mentioned about the purchase of an expensive car for the mayor.

The mayor must note that the purchase of an expensive car at a time when the council is making noise about being bankrupt and harassing residents with letters of final demand is reflective of a council that has a serious problem of misdirected priorities.

Residents understand that the mayor also needs to drive a good car as he goes about his official duties, but would it not be more reasonable to purchase a less expensive but good car? It is a known fact that the council has not done much to show for its existence at Town House taking into consideration the poor state of service delivery in Harare.

Roads are littered with potholes; street and traffic lights are not working and they have not been maintained; piles of garbage remain uncollected at most street corners in residential areas and shopping centres; raw sewage is still causing a lot of discomfort in most high density areas.

In spite of all these problems, the City of Harare is harassing residents with letters of final demand and threatening them with legal action. How can the mayor have the guts to say that the residents' complaints are not founded?

Residents know that the car is part of council property, but they would rather have garbage trucks to remove the ever growing garbage piles rather than have an expensive Mercedes Benz that will only benefit one person.

It is also unheard of for a mayor to brag about the numerous personal cars that he has. If he does not need the car, why is he accepting it? The mayor must also remember that when he got into office, he said that he had his own things and that he would not allow council to pamper him with the ratepayers' money.

The mayor also boasted in the media about his various connections in the business world and made promises that he would turn around the state of service delivery in the city. Residents want to see things happening on the ground and it is the job of the mayor to make sure that residents get value for their money.

The Merc is a blatant insult to residents who have been served with final letters of demand under the guise that the city has run out of money. Residents maintain that they will not pay for non-existent services.

CHRA remains committed to advocating good, transparent and accountable local governance as well as lobbying for quality and affordable services on a non-partisan basis. (CHRA)

Artificial ‘mountains’ and rivers in Harare

Editor - The number of ‘rivers’ and mountains have increased with time significantly in the high density areas of Harare. They defy the natural geomorphological features because there is no positive relationship between the rivers and the mountains (relief landforms). They are not attractive and do not have names, do not think of mountain climbing, fishing or worse off, swimming.

I am alluding to the heap of uncollected refuse and perennial sewerage run off in our streets. Initially, it was the issue of foreign currency and we thought the introduction of the use of multi-currency would curb the problem but in essence it has exacerbated. On the monthly bills, residents pay for both refuse and sewerage charges but has there ever been sewerage system repairs and refuse collections.

The natural ‘mountains and rivers’ are not pleasing to watch, we kindly urge the city of Harare through the department of waste management to get rid of them. These will reduce even our life expectancy against a background of poor performing economy where people find it difficult to have a nutritional diet due to low disposable incomes.

The consequence is that residents in the long run will be affected by different illnesses related to poor hygiene and that will even pose a more pathetic situation especially during these times when only a few can afford medication. Mine is a cry for the city of Harare to place logistics that will address this problem.

Brightman Hove, Mbare

Was it meant to be a struggle to take us nowhere?

N. Mbombera, University of Zimbabwe

You can imagine what it might have felt like for all the sons and daughters who had faced the wrath of the Smith regime and survived. You can imagine how they felt when on a deep down in the woods they were told that it was over. Surely you can retrace their smiles when news filtered in from the Lancaster that the one-eyed tyrant had finally decided that a ‘1000 years’ was an awful too long time to wait. It is too difficult to visualize why the white man decided to cut his losses and cling to the land rather than power in its own sake.

And even now you can seethe expression on the faces of the surviving cadres when they learnt that Canaan was not meant to be paradise. You can write a book about how, when they returned from the forests, they discovered that the houses that the white man had left were not enough for them to share. Only the few powerful would

have the luxury, as for the rest they would continue in their dagga houses. The difference is that you will not be working for the *baas* against your will anymore. It is your own life to live. If this is not what you fought for, then this is what you get. So ladies and gentlemen brace yourselves winter is coming.

That might have happened almost 3 decades ago but for those who care to analyze the facts history has a cruel way of making its spot but unlike those who battled to control their fate back then, a new group of disgruntled, disillusioned comrades in arms stare oblivion in the face. These are the student activists planted in various tertiary institutions. These are countless war veterans, ex-combatants and war collaborators who are yet to realize any dreams they nurtured and fought for against all odds. The masses of unemployed skilled and unskilled personnel who are still waiting for a chance that might never come. It is those few who are employed but underpaid and constantly on the radar because they are way below the poverty datum line. This is the story of you and me.

When the Global Political Agreement (GPA) ushered in a new political dispensation that on paper entailed a unity government and equal distribution of power, amongst the three main political powers, appeared to have arrived at last. Others might want to argue that the government we have is neither new nor elixir but it is indeed a step out of the woods. It is mediocre to say the least. It is a case of if I can not have this then I might as well have that because men are known to live by bread alone when there is no bread. It is true but unfortunately, besides the point, we have to concede that not only were we in danger of virtual starvation but we were on the brink of civil war. What we have is a situation whereby those who believe that they are the only ones bestowed with the mandate to shield this nation from the effects of neo-colonialism, have finally realized that not only are we willing to take the first step as a nation out of this political and economic conundrum, but we are also ready to admit failure as a democracy.

Once again we approached the heroes day commemorations and did so with caution. Others did so with remorse as they came face to face with the painful reality that what our fallen heroes died for is not what we are getting today. There might be no galas organized as in yester years but let us not be hoodwinked. State media, be it print or electronic is still awash with gibberish attached to heroes aligned to a certain political party. It is like our fallen heroes died for that certain political party to enjoy the milk and honey for our country. Is it what they died for? I thought they died for all of us to enjoy Zimbabwe.

Take nothing from the real heroes whose bones are scattered in our battlefields, known or unknown. The truth is someone came from behind and personalized the struggle. In the process that someone ran down this country, with the aid of his cronies into an outpost of tyranny, poverty, lawlessness, joblessness and now that someone still has the temerity of questioning our 'patriotism' because all we are asking for is a better Zimbabwe.

We are now forced to be strangers in foreign lands because we could not have a better livelihood at home. Is not this what Smith was doing to our forefathers back in the day. The difference is that now it is one of our own. Again, it is *de javu*.

We will never forget our heroes nor their sacrifices because we owe it to them but, we will never forget also in a short space of time, a country that prided itself in being the breadbasket of Africa has its citizenry as expert beggars. We will never forget that at one point our currency traded pound for pound with the British pound, but now it is a worthless piece of paper that an advertising agency in Mzansi thought it cheaper to erect a bill board completely made of Zimdollar. We will never forget that 95% of the population is unemployed and it is anybody's guess what they do for a living. Educational standards have fallen so drastically that everyone has lost faith in the local education system, or that we fear our own police force because they are so underpaid that they have turned to terrorizing people they vowed to serve and protect in order to eat. In our part of the world there is nothing unusual about poverty.

Yes, this is time to change our mindsets. The heroes did a sterling job but what are we doing with their legacy? Are we using it to prolong our stay in office and cling to power till Armageddon or are we rebuilding the ruins. Make your choice and you too can be a hero.

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Community Radio Harare

No 66, Fifth Street Cnr Livingstone

P.O Box 9147

Harare

Zimbabwe

Phone : 263-4-2906084

Cell : 0912 886 969/ 023 782 323

E-mail : radioharare@yahoo.co.uk