



Defending free expression and your right to know

The mass media have a critical role to play during “election periods” acting as the main sources of information for the public about the prevailing political environment, the preparations for holding the elections, and about the political contestants themselves. As the holding of harmonised elections on July 31st 2013 approaches, the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ) will be carrying daily media updates on this momentous event until the day after the election results are announced. The daily media updates monitor the output of the mainstream domestic print and electronic media relating to coverage of election issues. This is aimed primarily at establishing whether the media is communicating the information the public needs to make informed decisions when they go and vote – and whether they can vote freely. For any views and comments, you can email us at monitors@mmpz.org.zw

The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe

Daily Election Report No.14-2013

Sunday 28th July 2013

Electronic Media Report - Saturday, July 27, 2013

SUMMARY

With just three days to go before Zimbabweans vote in the “watershed” national elections, the local private radio station, ZiFM, carried just one story on the activities of the political parties; a report of ZANU PF’s star rally in Mkoba, Gweru. There were no reports of other parties, and not even a contemporary report of ZANU PF’s star rally today in Bulawayo.

However, this lack of contemporary “rally news” from ZiFM was more than compensated for by ZBC’s continuing saturation coverage of ZANU PF’s activities.

THE STATS

The electronic media recorded a total of 24 election-related stories. Of these 21 were on political party activities and just three stories on election administration issues.

Of the 21 political party activities, 15 were in the public broadcaster (ZTV, nine, and Spot FM, six) while the remaining six appeared in the privately owned radio stations (ZiFM one, Star FM two, and Studio 7 three).

ZTV allocated 18 minutes 06 seconds to ZANU PF activities in its main evening news bulletin. ZTV's coverage of the MDC-T extended to just one report of 3 minutes 58 seconds, while it covered independent candidate, Emmanuel Chiroto, in one report lasting 1minute 53 seconds castigating the MDC-T for not being democratic.

Notably, there were only three stories on the election's administration, despite growing concerns over allegations of irregularities in some of the processes; one appeared on ZTV, while the other two were reported on Studio 7.

PARTY CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

MDC-T painted in a bad light again...

ZBC continued to favour reporting on ZANU PF's rallies in its news stories, compared to its coverage of the other political parties. In what has become the norm, the national broadcaster's television and radio stations gave nearly three hours of live coverage to ZANU PF's White City Stadium rally in Bulawayo. The national broadcaster has yet to grant such live coverage to any other political party.

In addition, the evening news bulletins of Spot FM and ZTV were again completely dominated by news of ZANU PF's rallies, devoting nine of their 14 campaign stories to ZANU PF.

Such ongoing bias in favour of ZANU PF illustrates ZBC's contempt for Zimbabwe's electoral laws that demand the media cover the contesting political parties equitably – not to mention fairly.

On Sunday a member of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, responsible for enforcing these laws, was reported saying that ZBC was complying with the electoral laws governing the media's conduct during elections. However, the statistics in this report – and those preceding it – demonstrate that this is not true.

Notably, only Spot FM reported ZANU PF's presidential candidate, Robert Mugabe, castigating MDC-T leader Morgan Tsvangirai for declaring his intention to break the law and announce the election results.

ZTV confined itself to reporting mainly on Mugabe's promises to revive Bulawayo's industrial heart and solve its water problems if re-elected. ZBC's other party activity reports featured a variety of officials reiterating ZANU PF's rhetoric warning the electorate not to reverse the gains of independence.

Of the private radio stations, only Studio 7 carried one report each on ZANU PF and the MDC-T's party activities. ZiFM (one) and Star FM (three) only reported on ZANU PF's campaign.

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

MDC blamed for electoral problems

The electronic media carried just three stories on the administration of elections (ZBC one, private media two).

ZBC's only story on the administration of the elections (on ZTV) was an official report passively quoting African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Dr. Aisha Abdullahi, saying the two AU observer mission teams in the country were ***"neutral, unbiased and will give an objective bill of health on the Zimbabwean election."***

ZTV and Spot FM gave little prominence to stories that sought to highlight the various irregularities and inconsistencies in the electoral process.

ZBC's only report that endeavoured to do so was the negative MDC-T election campaign story that presented Tsvangirai as having ***"attacked"*** ZEC during an MDC-T rally in Chinhoyi when he challenged ZEC to give MDC-T a copy of the voters roll by Monday for inspection. Tsvangirai was also reported to have questioned why ZEC had printed eight million ballot papers when there were just 6.4million-registered voters.

Studio 7 also reported MDC's concern over the fact that the voters' roll had still not been released for inspection.

These brief references to irregularities in the electoral process in the electronic media, contrasted sharply with the print media's reports on these developments.

POLITICAL VIOLENCE

There were no reports of political violence in the electronic media, although there were two reports in the print media today.

Current Affairs Programmes

ZTV carried one programme today:

The Election Debate - hosted by Claude Mararike is billed as a programme where political parties' representatives solicit the electorate to vote for them.

Guests in this edition included Rtd. Rev Mubaira of Multi-Racial Christian Democracy Party; T.P Nyambiri, of the Progressive and Innovative Movement of Zimbabwe, and Sikhumbuzo Dube of ZAPU Federal.

Spot FM aired one programme:

The Candidate - a programme meant to familiarize people with the presidential candidates. The guest in this edition was MDC-T spokesperson Douglas Mwonzora, representing the MDC-T's Morgan Tsvangirai.

Political Advertising

ZTV aired seven different ZANU PF adverts, which were aired several times each and included a notice of ZANU PF's star rally at Harare's National Sports Stadium.

Notably, one new 40-second ZANU PF advert features former CAPS United and Warriors striker, Alois Bunjira, urging Zimbabweans to vote ZANU PF.

In addition to the ZANU PF advertising material, ZTV flighted three pro-party continuity music videos of between two and six and-a-half minutes long. One of these, by veteran musician Cde Chinx, was entitled '**Vote Team ZANU PF**' and lasted for 5 minutes 15 seconds.

Other political material flighted by ZTV and Spot FM included four different 45-second "adverts" whose sponsors were unidentified, attacking the MDC-T and the personality of its leader, Morgan Tsvangirai.

ZTV and Spot FM each aired 30-second MDC-T advertisements on three occasions during the five-hour prime-time period monitored.

The MDC-T "**more families**" advert was also aired twice on ZTV. This is 2 minutes 50 seconds long.

Spot FM and ZTV had two different ZEC adverts encouraging Zimbabweans to vote. Their duration was nearly 3 minutes.

Star FM alternated MDC-T and ZANU PF advertising at regular intervals.

ZiFM carried two 30-second MDC-T advertisements during prime-time, and one ZEC voter education advert, among other apolitical ads.

Print Media report for Sunday, July 28, 2013

SUMMARY

IN their final publications before Election Day, all the Sunday papers carried opinion and analysis exhorting their readers to “vote wisely” in Wednesday’s national elections.

But emerging controversies over the administrative aspects of the elections also took centre stage in all the papers too.

For example, they all reported on the MDC-T’s discovery that special vote ballots – allegedly made out in favour of the MDC-T – had been found dumped in a dustbin at the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission’s Elections Command Centre.

But *The Sunday Mail* remained optimistic reporting that preparations were progressing smoothly and that the country was ready for elections. The private print media continued to report on the MDC-T and civic organizations raising concerns about irregularities.

Political party activities also grabbed the print media’s attention today. *The Sunday Mail* gave wide and positive publicity to ZANU PF activities, while negatively covering MDC-T activities.

The Standard’s coverage of party activities was balanced, while the *Daily News on Sunday* largely focused on MDC-T activities. One incident of political violence was recorded in the *Daily News on Sunday*

THE STATS...

The print media carried 44 stories on Wednesday’s elections

Of these, 26 (59%) appeared in the private newspapers, *The Standard* and the *Daily News on Sunday*. The remaining 18 (41%) were captured in the state-owned *The Sunday Mail*.

Twenty-seven of the 44 stories (61%) were on party political campaigns, eight (18%) were on the administration of the elections, while the remaining nine were on election media issues, political violence and other general election issues.

The Standard and the *Daily News on Sunday* carried a ZEC advertisement on the dates of the elections and requirements voters will need on the day. All three Sunday papers carried a ZEC response to the MDC-T’s handling of the “lost special vote ballot paper” issue.

The *Daily News on Sunday* and *The Standard* each carried two MDC-T advertisements. The other ads in the private weeklies were on civic society organisations urging the electorate to vote peacefully, urging people to vote for female candidates, and an analysis of the special voting exercise and the political environment ahead of the polls.

CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

State media bias continues

The papers carried 26 stories on the party campaign activities. Five appeared in *The Standard*, seven in *the Daily News on Sunday* and 14 in *The Sunday Mail*. Twelve of *The Sunday Mail*'s 14 stories promoted ZANU PF campaigns; while the remaining two negatively reported on the MDC-T.

The Sunday Mail's front page was dominated by a picture of ZANU-PF's presidential candidate, Robert Mugabe, and his wife, Grace, at the party's White City Stadium rally in Bulawayo, and reported Mugabe denigrating his political rivals, the MDC-T, describing them as "**thieves**", "**stooges**" and "**corrupt**" adding: "**So today we must remind you that we offended the good work our revolutionaries did when, in 2008, we allowed once again the stooges of the enemy to have power**". The paper also quoted him promising his large audience that ZANU PF would revive Bulawayo's industries, as well as solve the city's water problems.

Notably, *The Sunday Mail* estimated the number of people attending the rally at 40,000, but provided no "official" figure to support this "guesstimate".

Additional coverage of ZANU-PF activities either sought to discredit the MDC-T and the West or praise Mugabe. For example Vice-President Joice Mujuru defended the cancellation of debts owed to councils at her rallies in Mufakose and Harare West saying, "**The West is against the pro-people policies being pursued by President Mugabe and they back the MDC-T in the hope of effecting regime change in Zimbabwe**".

Even their opinion pieces echoed these sentiments, "*Mr President, we await your victory speech*" and "*The tail whites attached to Tsvangirai*" which linked Tsvangirai to the West. In addition, only profiles of aspiring ZANU PF parliamentary candidates were published.

The Sunday Mail censored the MDC-T's Chegutu and Chinhoyi rallies. But they reported on the fact that 29 MDC-T defectors standing as independents would split the vote and damage the MDC-T's chances of winning in these constituencies.

The *Standard* gave fair and balanced coverage of the parties' activities. They carried two neutral stories on ZANU PF activities and three on the MDC-T. For example, the report on ZANU PF's Bulawayo rally provided a fairly detailed account of what transpired; and the MDC-T Chegutu and Chinhoyi rallies were covered in a neutral manner. The *Daily News on Sunday* gave wide publicity to preparations for the MDC-T star rally termed, "Cross Over Rally" set for tomorrow (Monday). However, the story on ZANU PF's star rally was littered with editorial intrusions. For example, the paper noted, "**Robert Mugabe yesterday tried to exorcise the demon of rejection by the people of Matabeleland**".

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

State media censors election irregularities

The state-run media continued to downplay complaints of irregularities regarding the administration of the polls. *The Sunday Mail* carried two stories on the subject. For instance, in their lead story, ZEC chair Rita Makarau was extensively quoted declaring the electoral body as ready to conduct the elections: **“At present, we are 95 percent done with the logistics. We are now mopping up on areas that may not have received certain materials...”** In the same report African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs Aisha Abdullahi was quoted describing MDC-T’s complaints on the poll irregularities as, **“cheap politicking”**. However the MDC-T’s reaction was not sought for balance.

The Sunday Mail’s report on MDC-T deputy national chairman Morgan Komichi’s claims that special vote ballot papers were discovered in a dustbin in Harare was one-sided. The paper only relied on a ZEC statement dismissing the claims as **“incredible”** and expressing concerns **“in the manner in which Mr Komichi handled the case”** without seeking the MDC-T’s side of the story.

In contrast, the private papers’ six stories exposed irregularities and continued to question ZEC’s ability to conduct the elections efficiently.

For example, *The Daily News on Sunday* quoted MDC secretary-general Tendai Biti claiming that ZEC was duplicating ballot papers for the purposes of rigging. Among other irregularities, the paper reported him questioning why ballot papers were being printed by different companies, why the voters’ roll had not been released, and why 8,328,100 ballot papers had been printed when only six million people are registered voters.

The Standard concurred, its editorial summed up the electoral problems dating back to the 2008 elections.

The *Daily News on Sunday* editorial defended Komichi’s actions as **“responsible”** and questioned why ZEC has handed over the case to the **“partisan police force”** for investigations.

Political Violence

The *Daily News on Sunday* carried one incident of political violence where MDC-T Mberengwa North parliamentary candidate Takavafira Zhou was allegedly attacked by a group of ZANU PF youths at Gwengwena Business Centre.

MMPZ responds to ZEC's media assessment

In a heavily editorialised story on the media's political coverage of the election campaign, *The Sunday Mail* quoted Zimbabwe Electoral Commissioner, Sibongile Ndlovu, claiming political parties had enjoyed fair coverage in both the public and private media while briefing SADC observers and representatives of political parties in Harare on Friday.

Responding to a question about the bias of the national public broadcaster, ZBC, in favour of ZANU PF, Ndlovu was reported saying, ***“the party (the MDC-T) failed to provide its programme schedules in line with standing regulations.”***

In an unconnected comment in the same news story, the paper claimed, ***“The Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe (MMPZ) has also been unashamedly accusing the public media of bias while praising private newspapers”***.

MMPZ notes the observations of Commissioner Ndlovu with grave concern. Under no circumstances can ZBC's television news broadcasts (or that of its radio station, Spot FM) be considered ***“fair”, “factually accurate”*** or ***“complete”***, as required in the electoral regulations. Nor can the ***“extent”***, ***“timing”*** and ***“prominence”*** of ZTV's coverage of the campaign activities of the contesting political parties be considered to be ***“equitable”***, as stated by the electoral regulations [section 160J (a-b)] governing the conduct of the media during an election. (For more details, see MMPZ's statement [29/713] sent out on the mailing list and published in the media; available on the website as well).

For statistical evidence of ZBC's coverage of political party campaigns, please feel free to contact us or view MMPZ's daily reports on the media's coverage of the election process on our Website <http://www.mmpz.org/>

The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ) was founded to promote freedom of expression and responsible journalism in Zimbabwe.

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