



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

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Electronic media report for Monday, July 29, 2013

SUMMARY

IN these final hours before Zimbabwe’s “watershed” elections the electronic media still failed to strike a balance in its reportage of the parties’ political campaign activities, and tended to restrict themselves to regurgitating official comments from actors involved in the election preparations. These media either failed to investigate these issues, or simply censored them.

For example, concerns raised by SADC’s chief elections officer, Bernard Membe, over the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission’s failure to make public the voters’ roll even at this late stage, and ZEC’s own admission that “mistakes”

had been made in the processing of the ballots were significant developments that the electronic media failed to capture.

THE STATS...

The electronic media recorded 43 election-related stories in their main evening bulletins today: Party campaign activities, 14; election administration issues, 20; party politics, six; political violence reports, three.

Of ZTV's 16 election stories, six were on party campaigns, five of which covered eight ZANU PF rallies, while the other one reported on the MDC-T's '**Cross-Over**' rally. The state broadcaster also carried four stories on the administration of elections and six on party politics.

ZBC's Spot FM reported seven stories. Two of these gave prominent coverage to ZANU PF rallies in Buhera, Borrowdale and Mt. Pleasant, while the remaining five were on the administration of elections.

Star FM aired two reports, covering the MDC-T rally and the joining of ZANU PF by the Mutumwa Mawere-led UDM executive. The station also aired two reports on the administration of the polls.

Studio 7's four stories all reported on the administration of elections, while SW Radio Africa broadcast seven stories, three on election administration issues, one on the MDC-T's final star rally in Harare, and three on political violence and related issues.

ZiFM reported five stories; three on party campaigns by ZANU PF and the MDC-T, and two on the administration of elections.

PARTY CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

State broadcaster maintains its bias

The electronic media was abuzz with reporting on the parties' campaign activities as the poll countdown reached fever pitch.

However, the coverage of the political parties' campaign activities in the bulletins of the national broadcaster, ZBC, remained heavily skewed in favour of ZANU PF.

The local private radio stations, Star FM and ZiFM, joined ZTV and Spot FM in reflecting this bias as they all revisited ZANU PF's star rally in Harare on Sunday, while giving less coverage to the hugely well attended MDC-T final '**Cross-Over**' rally held on open ground outside the Harare International Conference Centre.

On ZTV alone, reports on ZANU PF's Harare rally occupied 20 minutes of the bulletin, while the more topical MDC-T rally, only received four minutes. Carefully edited footage of the event ensured that ZTV's viewers never saw the extent of the massive turnout – just as the day before carefully edited footage of Mugabe's rally at the National Sport Stadium excluded views of the many empty stands.

In the private radio stations, Star FM and ZiFM reported extensively on ZANU PF rallies in Harare and Manicaland, while the MDC-T was again under-reported in three stories across these platforms. Studio 7 completely ignored party campaign stories altogether.

Without a major ZANU PF rally to report on, ZTV led its bulletin with a story about Mugabe hailing the party's indigenization programme, while Spot FM led with Vice-President Joice Mujuru's ZANU PF rally in Buhera.

None of the stations carried news of the minor political contestants.

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

ZEC 'ready' for polls, Komichi appears in court

The electronic media continued to focus narrowly on official statements from the authorities, such as the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) and representatives of the observer missions.

ZEC was embroiled in myriad events around the administration of elections with Studio 7 reporting, ***“The MDC-N alleges that ZEC is trying to rig Wednesday's national elections in favour of ZANU PF”***.

In one of its four stories on election administration issues, ZTV reported that MDC-T leader, Morgan Tsvangirai ***“has again castigated the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission alleging the body has failed to discharge its mandate with calls for the ZEC leadership to resign.”*** But it suffocated the reasons why he was calling for such action.

All the electronic media reported on the fate of the MDC-T's deputy national chairman, Morgan Komichi, after he had been arrested and detained on Sunday.

ZTV and Spot FM reported that he had appeared in court today ***“facing charges of fraud and contravening the Electoral Act after he was found in possession of ballot papers”***.

But SW Radio Africa provided a more accurate version of this development by reporting that Komichi had been arrested ***“after he was handed an envelope containing ballot papers found dumped in a dustbin following the Special Vote”*** for civil servants and uniformed forces who would be unable to vote on Election day.

Star FM and ZiFM only reported on Komichi's arrest.

ZTV and Spot FM again reported ZEC stating that the organization had made all the necessary arrangements to conduct a successful election, and reported the official comments from elections observers, such as the head of the African Union's observer team, former Nigerian president, Olusegun Obasanjo commending the peaceful electoral environment.

POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Only SW Radio Africa reported a case of political violence today - in Mberengwa where Biggie Chitoro ***“the notorious war veterans’ leader who caused terror in the district during the 2008 elections”***, was reported by the station to be roaming around threatening villagers with retribution if they voted for the MDC-T.

Current Affairs Programmes

ZTV broadcast two current affairs programmes:

Team ZANU PF presents: The People's Manifesto 2013. The 25-minute programme presented by Jonathan Moyo unpacks the ZANU PF manifesto, while serving as a platform to promote ZANU PF ideology.

Zimbabwe: The Awakening Giant. Presented by Tatenda Pemhiwa, examines empowerment issues benefiting the people of Zimbabwe. This 30-minute programme is a PR exercise for ZANU PF policies.

ZiFM also aired two current affairs programmes:

16/35: A 30-minute programme focusing on the X1G campaign aimed at mobilizing the youths, and;

The Ballot Box: a one-hour programme focusing on the preparedness of ZEC to deliver a credible poll.

Star FM featured one programme:

The 2013 Election Final Debate – Panellists in this programme included Ace Lumumba (ZANU PF), Douglas Mwonzora (MDC-T) and Francis Mufambi (MDC-N) discussing their parties' policies.

Political Advertising

Advertising in the electronic media has reached fever pitch with the electronic platforms carrying 32 different political advertisements seeking to lure voters.

ZTV led with 17 different adverts, including two pro-ZANU PF songs from Mbare Chimurenga Choir and Cde Chinx, lasting nearly 13 minutes between

them; two ZANU PF jingles and two party adverts, six unidentified anti-MDC-T/Tsvangirai adverts, two MDC-T adverts, and two educational ads from ZEC.

Spot FM followed with eight different adverts; three from ZANU PF, two from MDC-T and another two unidentified adverts attacking the MDC-T and the personality of its leader.

Star FM had two adverts one each for ZANU PF and the MDC-T, while ZiFM aired five adverts, one each for ZANU PF, MDC-T, ZEC and X1G.

ZANU PF advertising dominated airtime on all local radio and television stations with 12 adverts, revolutionary songs and jingles.

For statistical evidence of the media'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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