



Defending free expression and your right to know

The mass media are assigned an important role in political campaigns on popular votes. As the holding of a referendum on a new constitution on March 16 2013 approaches, the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ) will be carrying daily media updates on this momentous event until the day after the referendum results are announced. This is aimed primarily at establishing whether the media is communicating pertinent information to the public during the final referendum campaigns. For any views and comments, you can email us at monitors@mmpz.org.zw or sms us on our dedicated hotline cellphone number 0776 739 522.

**The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
Daily Media Referendum Watch – No.4-2013
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Electronic media report for Wednesday, March 13th, 2013

SUMMARY

THE electronic media carried 22 reports on the constitutional referendum.

Of these, 12 appeared on private radio stations. The remaining 10 were contained on the national broadcaster, ZBC [ZTV (seven) and Spot FM (three)].

Eleven of the 22 reports were on the administration of the referendum.

Five were on the 'Yes Vote' campaign by President Mugabe's ZANU PF party, while the remaining six were on those with reservations with the draft constitution.

CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

It's all about the 'Vote Yes' campaign!

THE national broadcaster, ZBC, continued to promote voices only campaigning for the adoption of the draft constitution in the referendum in all its five reports on whether Zimbabweans should 'Vote Yes' or 'No' in the referendum.

ZBC (13/3, 8pm) reported senior party officials such as Patrick Chinamasa, Oppa Muchinguri, Dick Mafios, Angeline Masuku and Anastacia Ndlovu, urging ZANU PF supporters, and Zimbabweans in general, to support the draft. These officials were speaking at several rallies across the country.

On one of the occasions, ZTV reported ZANU PF Women's League deputy chairperson Muchinguri telling party supporters in Bindura: ***"Look Kenya is now celebrating, so let's sort out our own situation. As ZANU-PF we worked with Kenyatta. Lets go and shame the devil by voting 'Yes'".***

In another report, the same station reported Ndlovu urging Zimbabweans to 'Vote Yes' because the draft offers ***"free basic education to all"*** as alluded to in Sections 19. 2 (d), 27 (2) and 75. 1 (a).

On the other hand, it was only the private radios that reported those opposed to the draft in their six reports. Half of these reports were on the dismissal by the Supreme Court of the NCA's appeal seeking an extension of the referendum date by at least two months (ZiFM, Studio 7 & SW Radio Africa, 13/3).

The remaining news items were on calls by some opposition parties, such as Mavambo and civic groups, such as the Zimbabwe Chapter of the International Socialist Organization for the public to reject the draft (Studio 7).

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

Civic groups condemn ZEC restriction

The ongoing conflict between ZEC and some civic groups over the electoral body's refusal to allow ZimRights to observe the referendum was the highlight of the private electronic media's coverage of the administration of the plebiscite.

This conflict comes hard on the heels of contradictory statements between Foreign Affairs Minister Simbarashe Mumbengegwi, Prime Minister Tsvangirai and ZEC over the invitation of foreign observers to observe the referendum and thereafter, harmonized elections (Studio 7).

SW Radio Africa (13/3) reported ZEC as having **“stuck to its guns”** over the ZimRights issue, in defiance of **“a directive issued by the principals to the GPA, following their meeting on Tuesday, that the commission had no right to refuse anyone the opportunity to observe the vote”**.

The private radios reported the commission reiterating that ZimRights cannot observe the referendum because the organization had a pending election-related court case (Studio 7 and SW Radio Africa).

These radios reported ZEC’s decision as having forced ZimRights to ask its lawyers to file an urgent High Court application challenging ZEC’s decision and several NGOs, under Crisis Coalition, threatening to withdraw from **“the observation process”** in protest.

In other reports, the private radios reported about a landmark ruling delivered by the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights in Gambia on March 11th, ordering Zimbabwe to allow its citizens in the Diaspora to vote in the referendum and general elections, expected in July (Studio 7).

The rights watchdog, Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, had filed an application with the commission on behalf of Zimbabwe Exiles Forum director Gabriel Shumba and other Zimbabweans living abroad, complaining that Harare only allowed embassy staff and others working for international organizations, to cast ballots during national elections. It’s not clear whether Harare will implement the ruling, Studio 7 noted.

ZBC ignored most of these concerns.

Its focus was on ZEC’s logistical preparations for the referendum.

CURRENT AFFAIRS PROGRAMMES

ZTV carried two current affairs programmes, while Star FM aired one.

One of ZTV’s programmes, *Economic Forum*, hosted by Napoleon Nyani, invited ZEC acting chairperson Joyce Kazembe to discuss preparations for the referendum.

Kazembe expressed satisfaction with her commission’s preparations and its ability to hold a credible ballot.

Asked about the successful Kenyan processes where over 25 million copies of the draft constitution were distributed in a population of 41 million, compared to the 90 000 copies for a population of 12 million in the Zimbabwean case, Kazembe noted: **“In the Kenyan exercise they had the resources and time to do that. Their process was different, as they did not have an out reach programme. We had to rush the process because constitutionally we have an election this year”**.

The other programme, *The Referendum*, featured MDC 99 president Job Sikhala, denouncing the draft and referendum.

Asked by host Oscar Pambuka why he was opposed to the draft, Sikhala said: ***“First, I cannot debate the issues that led to the process that led to the draft being flawed as they have been exhausted by Professor Madhuku. Three political parties in the GPA have authored the draft. It was not a people-driven constitution; that is a fact, as we know as Zimbabweans that the President, Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister and Professor Welshman Ncube had to sit down and tread on some of the provisions of the draft. Second we are not in agreement with the time given to the people of Zimbabwe to familiarize themselves with the draft. They should have been given at least three months”.***

Sikhala continued: ***“What we will see on Saturday is simply a circus which they will try to pass off as a referendum whereby, a people who have never got hold of the document are asked to make a determination out of it”.***

Star FM broadcast its regular programme, *The Solution*, hosted by AC Lumumba.

It featured people from various walks of life, such as Copac co-chairman Douglas Mwonzora, NCA spokesman Madock Chivasa, Pastor Pertunia Chiriseri, and Mavambo’s Chenjerai Gwanzura expressing different views on the draft.

Print media report for Thursday, March 14th, 2013

SUMMARY

THE print media carried 17 reports on the constitutional referendum, to be held this coming Saturday.

Of these, 10 appeared in the private media, while the remaining seven were contained in the state-owned dailies.

Eight (47%) of the 17 reports were on the administration of the referendum.

Four were on the ongoing ‘Yes Vote’ campaign by Zimbabwe’s main political parties. Five were on those opposed to the draft constitution, led by Mavambo/Kusile/Dawn and the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA).

CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

Tsvangirai in defensive mode

NEWS of Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai defending the retention of executive powers in the draft constitution, saying that a President **“must not be a stooge without authority”**, was the most significant aspect of the print media’s coverage of the ‘Yes Vote’ campaign.

Tsvangirai’s remarks came amid reports that he was **“under fire”** from some “opposition” parties and sections of civil society for reportedly **“backing”** the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) secretariat, which he **“exonerated for any electoral wrong doing”** last Monday (*NewsDay*, 14/3).

The *Daily News* (14/3) reported the PM as having expressed support for the retention of executive powers at a ‘Vote Yes’ rally in Mt Darwin yesterday (Wednesday). The PM said a nation’s leader should have the power to declare war when need be, among other unfettered powers given in the draft. Said Tsvangirai: **“President wenyika haafanirwe kuve musoro chete asina kana simba (a president of a country should not be a figure-head without authority), he must have executive powers to execute his duties”**.

The *Daily News* reported Tsvangirai’s comments as contrasting sharply with civil society groups and other organizations campaigning for a ‘No Vote’ in the referendum. These groups, led by the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), have been widely reported criticizing both MDC formations for allowing the inclusion of **“excessive executive powers”** in the draft (*Daily News*).

The PM’s campaign was part of the four reports the print media carried on the ‘Yes Vote’ campaign.

The print media also reported those with reservations with the draft.

One of them, Mavambo leader Simba Makoni, told the *Daily News* (14/3) that his party was opposed to the draft because it **“should have provided for a 70-year age cap on presidential aspirants”**. Makoni added: **“We have issues with discrimination in the death penalty, the gender balance in the election of legislators, as well as the variance in the appointment of director general of the CIO in comparison to other heads of the security arms of the State”**.

Makoni also argued that there was no rationality in deferring the operations of a Constitutional Court for seven years, as well as the contentious issue of running mates claiming they were only included for political expedience or to placate political parties that faced implosion (*Daily News*, 14/3).

He said: **“There is no reason why Zimbabweans should continue to pay for two vice-presidents besides the fact that it is only meant to maintain peace and balance in some political formations that would disintegrate instantly if it is not implemented”**.

The private daily reported Makoni promising to mobilize his supporters to ‘Vote No’ in the referendum.

But those opposed to the draft appeared to have suffered a major blow after the Supreme Court threw out the NCA's bid to stop the referendum (all papers).

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

Outrage over PM's defence of ZEC

THE private print media reported Tsvangirai's defence of the ZEC secretariat last Monday as having sparked outrage from a wide cross section of Zimbabwean society.

NewsDay (14/3) reported the PM as having claimed that the secretariat was **"competent to run the upcoming referendum"**, while blaming an **"underhand"** force for the **"shenanigans"** that led to the disputed 2008 polls.

The private daily viewed the statement as signalling an about turn by the PM whose MDC-T party has been demanding an overhaul of the secretariat on the grounds that most of its members were State security agents.

NewsDay reported MDC spokesman Nhlanhla Dube saying Tsvangirai's closeness to President Mugabe had compromised him to the extent that he now agreed with everything the President said.

Director for the Zimbabwe Democracy Institute, Pedzisayi Ruhanya, argued that ZEC was not qualified to run the referendum, considering its 2008 record in which it took close to a month to release presidential election results. (*NewsDay*). **"I do not know what has changed that makes a political party to think that it is competent"**, Ruhanya said, adding: **"ZEC is compromised and it needs to be reformed because it's the same secretariat that was involved in the 2008 elections"**.

Notably, the paper perpetuated Zimbabweans' collectively short (and inaccurate) memory in that the result of the presidential vote in that election was delayed by five weeks, rather than "close to a month".

News of this fresh debate over ZEC's ability to hold credible elections coincided with reports that NCA chairman Lovemore Madhuku had immediately mounted another challenge at the Supreme Court seeking to bar ZEC's acting chairperson Joyce Kazembe from supervising the referendum, arguing that she was unqualified for the job (*NewsDay*).

These two reports were among the eight stories the print media carried on the administration of the referendum.

The remaining six were mostly on ZEC's alleged defiance of the principals' order to allow all civic groups - including those facing criminal charges - to freely observe the vote; and ZEC's Press conference where the commission announced the banning of cell phones in voting booths and the deployment of polling officers to various polling stations countrywide (all papers).

All papers also carried prominent voter education adverts and those campaigning for Zimbabweans to 'Vote Yes' or 'No' for the draft.

Fig: 1 Breakdown of advertisements per paper

Paper	Copac	ZEC	ZESN	CCJP	Veritas	ZANU PF	MDC- T	MDC- N
<i>The Herald</i>	1 (Vote Yes)	2 (Public notices)	1 (Neutral)	1 (Vote Yes)	1 (Neutral)	1 (Vote Yes)		
<i>Daily News</i>	1 (Vote Yes)	2 (Public notices)			1 (Neutral)		1 (Vote Yes)	
<i>NewsDay</i>	1 (Vote Yes)	2 (Public notices)	ZCTU (Vote No)		1 (Neutral)			1 (Vote Yes)

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