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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.5-2013
Friday, March 15th 2013**

Electronic media report for Thursday, March 14th, 2013

SUMMARY

THE electronic media carried 25 reports on the constitutional referendum.

Of these, 10 appeared on private radio stations. The remaining 15 were aired on the national broadcaster, ZBC [ZTV (11) and Spot FM (four)].

Twelve (48%) of the 25 were on the 'Yes Vote' campaign by Zimbabwe's coalition parties and some sections of civil society.

Six were on those advocating for the rejection of the draft.

The remaining seven reports were on the administration of the referendum.

CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

Mixed views over draft constitution

DESPITE concerted efforts by Zimbabwe's coalition parties and the Parliamentary Constitutional Select Committee (Copac) to mobilize Zimbabweans for a 'Yes Vote' in tomorrow's referendum, a survey on a cross section of the public carried in Harare by ZiFM showed divided public opinion on the matter.

While those who supported the 'Yes Vote' initiative expressed satisfaction with the Copac draft, saying it was good, those that remained undecided attributed this to their ignorance of the contents of the draft due to the little time accorded Zimbabweans to study the document.

Most of those who expressed lack of knowledge of the contents of the draft were ordinary members of the society.

ZiFM (14/3) recorded them arguing they were ***“not ready to vote because the time they were given to go through the draft was too little”***. One of these said he found it ***“queer”*** that coalition parties and Copac were telling them to 'Vote Yes' without ***“sufficiently informing the people about the contents of the draft”***.

But the national broadcaster, ZBC, and the majority of private radio stations restricted their coverage on the matter to the parties and civic groups' campaign for the 'Yes Vote'.

Highlights of this campaign included calls by Prime Minister Tsvangirai for the public to 'Vote Yes' while addressing party supporters at Large City Hall in Bulawayo; and similar calls by ZANU PF national chairman Simon Khaya Moyo and several interest groups such as women and youth organizations (ZBC, 14/3, 8pm, Star FM & Studio 7, 14/3).

In one such case, Studio 7 reported Tsvangirai telling hundreds of MDC-T supporters in Bulawayo that the new constitution ***“will protect citizens”*** from what he called ***“the tyranny of the majority”***, saying minority rights ***“are well enshrined”*** in the draft.

The PM also said the draft ***“will ensure the equitable distribution of national resources to all the country's provinces”*** (Studio 7).

CURRENT AFFAIRS PROGRAMMES

THERE were two current affairs programmes on the referendum.

One of these, *Constitution Matters*, appeared on the national television station, ZTV. The other one was aired on Star FM.

Star FM's *The Solution*, featured a Mavambo youth leader repeating his party's position to reject the draft.

ZBC's CEO Happison Muchechetere hosted the ZTV special current affairs programme. The panellists consisted ZANU PF's Chris Mutsvangwa; leader of MDC99 Job Sikhala; Spokesperson for MDC-N Qhubani Moyo; MDC-T's Jessie Majome; and National Constitutional Assembly representative Blessing Vava.

The three representatives of the coalition parties vigorously defended the draft and urged Zimbabweans to endorse it while Sikhala and Vava called on Zimbabweans to reject the document, saying it was **"not people-driven"**.

The two felt that Zimbabweans were **"not given enough time to study the document"**; and that it was a **"bad document"** that gave too much power to the President, among others.

But the three coalition parties representatives felt those opposing the draft were **"ignorant of its contents"** and opposing it to **"please their sponsors"** as a way of **"maintaining their relevance"**.

One of the highlights of this discussion was Majome's correction of Sikhala and Vava on the constitutional matters after allegedly displaying **"little appreciation"** of the law.

In one of these, Vava had argued that one of the reasons why the NCA was opposed to the draft was because it gives Mugabe the right to make many government appointments. He singled out the Attorney General, which he argued must be appointed by the Judicial Services Commission (JSC).

But Majome, who is also deputy Justice Minister, corrected Vava, advising him that the AG was an Executive appointment the world over, as the AG represents government, particularly in civil cases. Majome said it was actually the Prosecutor-General who should be appointed in consultation with the JSC because the PG represents the State, as opposed to the Government. Majome said the PG's duty is to prosecute any one, suspected of committing a criminal offence **"regardless of their political affiliation"**.

Print media report for Friday, March 15th, 2013

SUMMARY

THE print media carried 12 reports on the constitutional referendum, to be held this Saturday.

Of these, eight appeared in the private media, while the remaining four were contained in the state-owned daily, *The Herald*.

Five (42%) of the 12 reports were on the administration of the referendum.

Four were on the 'Yes Vote' campaign by Zimbabwe's main political parties and some civic groups such as Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition. The remaining three were on those opposed to the draft constitution, led by *Mavambo/Kusile*, the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) and the Progressive Teachers' Union (PTUZ).

CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

Parties wind down 'Yes Vote' campaign

CALLS by Prime Minister Tsvangirai and Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (CZC), a grouping of more than 350 civil society organizations, for Zimbabweans to vote for the Copac draft in tomorrow's referendum were highlights of the 'Vote Yes' campaign.

NewsDay (15/3) reported Tsvangirai telling party supporters at Large City Hall in Bulawayo yesterday that Zimbabweans must vote for the new constitution because it has limits for terms of office for the President and heads of government institutions. The PM added that the draft constitution was also good because it provides for the establishment of a commission on peace, healing and reconciliation to deal with perpetrators of **"the violence of past 90 years"** and to heal those **"who have been hurt"** (*NewsDay*).

The Herald (15/3) presented an interesting and highly-charged debate on whether Zimbabweans should vote 'Yes' or 'No' in the referendum. It reported Copac co-chairman Douglas Mwonzora and Progress Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe secretary-general Raymond Majongwe as having **"locked horns"** over some provisions on labour laws in the draft, which apparently degenerated into personal insults.

In one such case, the official daily reported Mwonzora describing Majongwe as **"a dull and unintelligent labour leader who is failing to interpret a section on Labour Rights"**. This followed Majongwe's criticism of Labour Rights provisions under Section 65 in the draft. The PTUZ boss wanted a clause to be inserted, stating that civil servants should be paid salaries above the Poverty Datum Line (PDL).

Said Mwonzora: **"It is a shame that that there are some labour leaders like Majongwe who are just making noise for no reason, they are simply criticizing the draft Constitution to gain relevance. People must be able to fully understand and interpret constitutional provisions before they rush to criticize because they may end up poisoning others with their ignorance"**.

In response, Majongwe reportedly said he had a democratic right to interpret the draft Constitution the way he sees fit, describing Mwonzora as **"a dictator who does not tolerate opposing views"**.

He argued his criticism was **"was justified"** because he wanted the new constitution to make it clear that civil servants must earn salaries above the PDL.

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

More questions over ZEC's credibility

THE private Press continued to raise questions over the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC)'s ability to conduct a credible referendum tomorrow, and the subsequent harmonized national elections.

The debate appeared to have been revived by Tsvangirai's claims that ZEC was able to effectively conduct elections, considering the widespread criticism it received for its handling of the disputed 2008 polls.

Tsvangirai's defence of the ZEC opened floodgates of criticism from a wide cross section of Zimbabwean society (all private newspapers).

While the MDC-T leader was expressing satisfaction with ZEC, another senior party official Obert Gutu was reported **"demanding urgent reform of ZEC"**, arguing that the **"militarization of the electoral body"** and **"the continued failure to give legal effect to the appointment of a substantive chairperson"** were detrimental to the holding of credible elections (the *Zimbabwe Independent*, 15/3).

The *Zimbabwe Independent* cited Gutu's contradictory remarks as evidence of **"discord"** in the Prime Minister's party over the need to reform ZEC ahead of elections.

The *Independent's* Editor's Memo warned that Tsvangirai's remarks **"place him in a tight corner by limiting his options should elections be disputed again"**. It noted that Tsvangirai might have made the remarks in his capacity as supervisor of electoral processes ahead of polls, **"a position many deem a poisoned chalice"**.

The column added that Mugabe's decision to have Tsvangirai supervise electoral processes might have been **"a political gimmick to ensure the premier acts as an alibi for his own self-destruction by compromising his ability to complain and seek redress should the elections be stolen again"**.

And *NewsDay* (15/3)'s leader page raised further questions over ZEC's credibility. It argued that the commission's decision to ban the Zimbabwe Human Rights Association from monitoring the referendum was **"a giant step backwards"** and **"an unnecessary sideshow"**, which could further erode the integrity of ZEC **"that appeared to be on the mend with the coming-in of the inclusive government"**.

While the private papers were assessing ZEC's ability to conduct credible polls, *The Herald* (15/3) was relaying the commission's pronouncements on its final preparations for the referendum.

These included the accreditation of 2,000 local and foreign observers; revelations that the inspection and sealing of ballot boxes would be done at 6:30am tomorrow at all polling stations; that vote counting in the referendum will be done at the polling stations immediately after voting ends and the results displayed outside the polling stations; and updates on the deployment of polling officers and police details across the country.

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	Organ on National Healing	ZESN	Bishops of Southern Africa	ZANU PF	MDC-T
<i>The Herald</i>	1 (Vote Yes)	1 (Neutral)	1 (Neutral)		1 (Vote Yes)	
<i>Daily News</i>	1 (Vote Yes)	1 (Neutral)	1 (Neutral)			1 (Vote Yes)
<i>NewsDay</i>	1 (Vote Yes)	1 (Neutral)	1 (Neutral)	1 (Neutral)		1 (Vote Yes)
<i>Zimbabwe Independent</i>	1 (Vote Yes)		1 (Neutral)			1 (Vote Yes)

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