



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.6-2013
Saturday, March 16th 2013**

Electronic media report for Friday, March 15th, 2013

SUMMARY

THE electronic media carried 30 stories on the constitutional referendum.

Of these, 20 (67%) appeared on private radio stations and the remaining 10 on the national television station, ZTV.

Seven of the 30 reports were on the 'Yes Vote' campaign by Zimbabwe's coalition parties and the Parliamentary Constitutional Select Committee (Copac). Three were on those organizations expressing reservation about the draft such as the Interdenominational Church leaders, MDC99, and the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA).

The other 18 were on the administration of the referendum. The remaining two were on other referendum related issues.

CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

Zimbabweans told to 'Vote Yes'

THE national broadcaster, ZBC, and private radio stations gave more publicity to the 'Yes Vote' campaign, led by Zimbabwe's coalition parties and the Parliamentary Constitutional Select Committee (Copac).

This campaign was promoted in four of the five reports these media carried on the debate about whether Zimbabweans should vote for the new constitution or not.

Among those reported urging Zimbabweans to 'Vote Yes' were Chimurenga music star Thomas Mapfumo; Youth and Indigenization Minister Saviour Kasukuwere; and Consumer Council of Zimbabwe president Rosemary Siyachitema.

In one such case, SW Radio Africa (14/3) reported US-based Mapfumo saying if the new constitution was good for the people then Zimbabweans **'should just go for it'** at the referendum. Mapfumo, who is in the UK to perform in a joint show with fellow music legend Oliver Mtukudzi, told SW Radio Africa that **"even though he has not read the draft charter, Zimbabweans have been suffering for a very long time and therefore should vote for the new constitution if it is good for them"**.

In another, Siyachitema was reported saying, **"all Zimbabweans should go and vote in the referendum to safeguard their rights as consumers"** (Star FM, 15/3).

The same station, reported Kasukuwere urging, **"All youths to go and 'Vote Yes'"**, saying the new constitution, **"will guarantee them the right to be empowered"**.

But these media hardly investigated whether Zimbabweans from all corners of the country were aware of the contents of the draft.

Reservations on the draft were only raised in three reports, one of which was aired on Star FM.

The story was based on a meeting between some church leaders and Prime minister Tsvangirai where the church leaders, who included Charles and Petunia Chiriseri of His Presence Ministry and Noah Pashapa, reportedly expressed their disapproval of a number of clauses in the draft.

They told the PM that they were concerned that **"immorality"** and **"other Satanic activities could find their way into Zimbabwean society"** through some provisions of the draft. Of great concern to the church leaders was the draft's alleged failure to **"explicitly ban abortion and the practice of homosexuality"** (Star FM).

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

ZimRights to observe referendum

NEWS that the High Court had ordered ZEC to grant permission to the Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights) to observe the referendum and the swearing-in of Supreme Court judge Justice Rita Makarau as chairperson of the ZEC were the highlights of the day.

Local human rights watchdog ZimRights had gone to court challenging ZEC's decision to bar the organization from observing the referendum on the grounds that it was facing criminal investigations.

The court's decision to force ZEC to grant ZimRights observer status in the referendum and the appointment of Makarau as ZEC chair – to replace Justice Simpson Mutambanengwe who recently resigned from the position reportedly due to ill-health – were contained in five of the 18 reports the electronic media carried on the administration of the referendum.

The other 10 reports were based on updates from ZEC on their arrangements for voting in the referendum, including comments by government officials and SADC representatives praising the commission's preparations.

The remaining three raised doubts over ZEC's ability to hold credible elections, citing, among others, the commission's refusal to permit observers from "hostile" Western countries and inadequate voter awareness campaign.

These three reports only appeared in the private radio stations.

Print media report for Saturday, March 16th, 2013

SUMMARY

THE print media carried 27 reports on the constitutional referendum.

Of these, 19 appeared in the private media, while the remaining eight were contained in the state-owned daily, *The Herald*.

Twelve (44%) of the 27 reports were on the administration of the referendum.

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

The other four were on allegations of politically motivated violence, committed by suspected ZANU PF supporters in Harare and Kwekwe.

Referendum vote – guided democracy?

CONCERNS by voters, especially those in rural areas, and civic groups that Zimbabweans were asked to vote for the new constitution whose contents they knew little about were the highlight of the private papers' coverage of the administration of today's referendum.

NewsDay and *Daily News* (16/3) reported Zimbabweans as likely to 'Vote Yes' despite controversies over some of the provisions in the draft and the limited time voters were afforded to study the document. This was also, they reported, in spite of efforts by the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), the Progressive Teachers' Union (PTUZ) and the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) for the public to reject the draft.

The private dailies reported residents in Harare, Bulawayo, Matabeleland North and South, Midlands, Masvingo and Mashonaland East provinces saying they will 'Vote Yes' only because their parties had told them to do so, and not because they were conversant with the contents of the draft.

But *The Herald* (16/3) painted a rosy picture of the ZEC's preparations for the referendum, including the just-ended awareness campaign by the Constitutional Parliamentary Select Committee (Copac), in all its reports on the administration of the referendum.

The official daily restricted itself to rehashing referendum updates from ZEC depicting smooth preparations, and official comments by government and SADC dignitaries hailing the preparations for the referendum.

In one such case, *The Herald* passively reported newly sworn-in ZEC chairperson Justice Rita Makarau saying voter education **"had been conducted in eight days by ZEC officials and by other civic organizations"**.

No attempt was made to question whether the voter education period had been enough, especially in light of concerns by the general public that the authorities had not given them enough time to familiarise themselves with the document they were being asked to vote for.

Instead the paper simply reported the new ZEC boss saying, **"All things were in place for voting in the referendum"**. She cited the deployment of polling officers and observers; the printing of 12 million ballot papers; the increase in polling stations from 9 449 to 9 456 **"after discovering new areas that needed to be covered"**; and the accreditation of over 1 500 observers.

The same report cited ZEC deputy chairperson Joyce Kazembe saying **"only observers from those countries that imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe were denied registration"** without questioning the appropriateness and implications of ZEC's actions. Kazembe stated that ZEC had registered

several other foreign observers from countries such as Russia, adding: ***“We have accredited embassy personnel and we stated that we only required five members per mission.”***

In other reports, *The Herald* reported Tanzanian Foreign Affairs and International Relations Minister Bernard Membe; SADC executive secretary Tomaz Salamao; SADC Parliamentary Forum ***“expressing satisfaction”*** with preparations for the referendum.

RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Violence stalks referendum

THE print media reported two incidents of political motivated violence, one in Harare’s high-density suburb of Mbare and the other in Mbizo Township, Kwekwe.

The Harare incident, which was reported by all the daily papers, was directly linked to the referendum.

The private papers identified ZANU PF supporters as behind the attack of nine MDC-T members and a BBC news crew at Nenyere Flats in Mbare. The nine, led by aspiring MP for Mbare Sten Zvorwadza, were allegedly assaulted while putting up MDC-T posters encouraging people to vote for the new constitution.

They were reportedly in the company of BBC’s Africa Correspondent Andrew Harding and cameraman Stuart Phillips who were photographing the MDC-T group as they put up the party’s ‘Vote Yes’ campaign posters.

The Herald reported the same case, but in the context of the police accusing the MDC-T of ***“acting”***. The daily reported the police accusing MDC-T supporters of ***“dramatizing”*** the Mbare incident. It quoted police spokesman Oliver Mandipaka saying the incident was ***“stage managed to create news for the BBC crew”***.

The Herald and Mandipaka did not disclose the political affiliation of the assailants.

In another incident, suspected ZANU PF youths were reported as having ***“gate crashed”*** an MDC-T rally in Kwekwe last Thursday and attempted to attack the party’s secretary-general Tendai Biti, who was the guest speaker at the event (*NewsDay*).

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	ZBC	ZESN	MISA	Election Resource Centre	ZANU PF	MDC-T
<i>The Herald</i>		1 (Notice)					
<i>Daily News</i>	1 (Vote Yes)	1 (Notice)	1 (Neutral)	1 (Notice)	1 (Notice)		1 (Vote Yes)
<i>NewsDay</i>	1 (Vote Yes)	1 (Notice)	1 (Neutral)	1 (Notice)			1 (Vote Yes)

Produced and circulated by the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe, 9 Knight Bruce Road, Milton Park, Harare, Tel: 263 4 741816 / 778115, E-mail: monitors@mmpz.org.zw

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