

The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
Monday June 14th - Sunday June 20th 2010
Weekly Media Review 2010-23

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THE WEEK'S TOP STORIES

THE launch of the long-awaited constitutional outreach consultation exercise after months of bickering among the coalition parties was the highlight of the week in all the media.

The government-run media, however, simply endorsed this development as evidence of progress in the implementation of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) without questioning Zimbabweans' ability to fully express themselves amid reports of intimidation by ZANU PF supporters, especially in rural areas. The private media continued to highlight the implications of this problem, alongside inadequate funding, logistical hitches and the ongoing information drought, reported to be more prevalent in rural areas.

The operations of the inclusive government, particularly efforts to normalize relations with the West, and the controversial decision by Kimberley Process monitor Abbey Chikane to certify Chiadzwa's diamonds, sparking international condemnation, competed for attention too.

Fig 1: The most popular stories

Media	Constitutional reform process	Inclusive government	Chiadzwa diamonds	Human rights
State-run media	33	28	15	0
Private media	39	49	33	43
Total	72	77	48	43

COPAC's outreach hit by fear and confusion

CALLS by the coalition principals for Zimbabweans to desist from violence and allow others to express themselves freely during the constitutional outreach meetings were the focus of the media's coverage of the constitutional reform programme.

However, none of the government media reported that despite the principals' appeals, political violence and intimidation continued to be reported across the country. Neither did they remind their audiences that the process was long overdue, or assess its implications on the coalition's ability to hold elections next year under a new, democratic constitution.

However, *The Herald* (22/6), belatedly reported the prevailing information drought hindering Zimbabweans' ability to fully participate in the exercise in its front-page story: *Outreach mired in confusion*. The report, based on a "snap survey", revealed that many Zimbabweans did not know how they could participate. One of those interviewed, a Bindura farm worker, said: **"I have not heard anything about that (outreach meetings). We are spending time in the fields as you can see. Because of that there is no way I can participate because I do not know what it is all about"**.

However, most government media reports confined themselves to the principals' calls for Zimbabweans not to intimidate each other during the exercise, or to denials by members of the Constitutional Parliamentary Select Committee (COPAC) of private media reports about the prevalence of violence.

Although ZTV (16/6, 8pm) and the government dailies (17/6) quoted Prime Minister Tsvangirai urging the police to **"deal decisively with any forces that might try to derail the process"**, none of them inquired about what might have prompted this comment.

Instead, *The Herald* (19/6) quoted Copac co-chairman Paul Mangwana dismissing reports that villagers were being intimidated from airing their views: **"No one has brought that to our attention. It is part of the propaganda meant to discredit the process"**.

The official papers published about 13 public awareness adverts from Copac informing Zimbabweans about the dates and venues for the meetings and the itinerary for the first week of the outreach programme. The national public broadcaster, ZBC however, continued to carry no information about the exercise in contravention of its mandate to inform the public about important national events.

The private media maintained that the prevailing political environment in the country was not conducive for Zimbabweans to freely participate in the outreach programmes.

They cited as proof alleged intimidation, especially in rural areas, aimed at boosting support for ZANU PF's position on the new constitution. This was reflected in 14 (36%) of their stories.

SW Radio Africa and *The Zimbabwean On Sunday* (18 & 20/6) quoted the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), a coalition of civic organizations involved in election monitoring and voter education, saying its members had noted a **"litany of human rights violations"** in some parts of the country. It identified ZANU PF as the main culprit and argued that such behaviour **"defeated the objectives of the outreach programme..."**

State media ignores coalition friction

THE private media's reports of the MDC-T's Finance Minister Tendai Biti, "storming out" of a Cabinet meeting after clashing with ZANU PF ministers over the Reserve Bank's debt restructuring plan, was the latest indication of friction in the inclusive government.

In spite of this, the government media gave the impression that the coalition parties were working in harmony to revitalize the country and reported the launch of the constitutional outreach programme as evidence of this in nine of their 28 stories on the government's activities.

In 17 other reports they vilified the West for imposing sanctions on Zimbabwe, refusing to acknowledge their existence, and being reluctant to remove them. The remaining two were updates on the paralyzed power-sharing talks.

But the government dailies (17/6) did not see this paralysis when they passively quoted President Mugabe denying the existence of "**divisions**" and "**animosity**" between him and Tsvangirai.

Instead, ZBC (14/6, 1pm) and *The Herald* (15/6) presented Western sanctions as the single greatest obstacle to progress. They quoted Foreign Affairs Minister Samuel Mumbengegwi accusing the EU of not being sincere in their desire to restore relations with Zimbabwe and "**playing games with the lives of the people...**" Apart from failing to seek the EU's comment, these media concealed the exact reasons behind the EU's reluctance, chief among them, ZANU PF's unwillingness to restore democratic rule in Zimbabwe.

In contrast, the private media reported commentators identifying ideological differences, mutual distrust, lack of transparency and disrespect as the major causes of the friction between the coalition partners.

The Zimbabwe Independent (18/6) cited Finance Minister Tendai Biti's walk-out from a Cabinet meeting as proof of this, while *Newsday* & *NewZimbabwe.com* (15 & 16/6) reported Deputy Prime Minister Mutambara blaming Mugabe and Tsvangirai for hindering the implementation of the power sharing agreement by sticking to their "**selfish**" party positions.

Conspiracy propaganda tarnishes diamonds deal

THE decision by Kimberley Process monitor Abbey Chikane to certify Chiadzwa's controversial diamonds despite concerns over human rights violations and irregularities in mining the diamonds continued to generate attention in all the media.

The debate escalated ahead of the KP meeting in Israel on June 21, which was widely expected to consider whether or not to adopt Chikane's decision.

Instead of investigating the validity of the global condemnation of Chikane's verdict, the government-controlled media exclusively portrayed the disapproval as part of a Western conspiracy against Zimbabwe. *The Herald* (16/6) quoted Mines Minister Obert Mpofu dismissing the findings of a Canadian based organisation, Partnership Africa Canada (PAC), alleging "rampant" smuggling and human rights violations in Chiadzwa and urging the KP to suspend Zimbabwe from trading in diamonds until it complied with the KP requirements. Mpofu discredited PAC's findings on grounds that "**local people**"

bent on **“demonizing”** the country compiled them. Meanwhile, *The Sunday Mail* (20/6) accused the country’s alleged **“detractors”** of leading the campaign ahead of the Israel meeting to arm-twist the KP to **“black list”** the country’s diamonds.

But in one extraordinary front-page story, *The Herald* (18/6) reported the astonishing news that British and Belgian companies had bought diamonds from Chiadzwa on several occasions, citing a report that was allegedly compiled by an independent investigator on government’s behalf. The twist in this story came when the paper quoted “industry sources” accusing the West of hypocrisy because their governments must have been aware of the sales. The paper claimed Western governments were trying to make sure the diamonds would not be granted KPCS approval because **“the gems were ‘bloody’”**.

The private media reported widespread condemnation of Chikane’s decision.

So strong was the disapproval that *The Zimbabwean On Sunday* (20/6) reported that some KPCS members, especially companies and civic organizations that provide services to the diamond watchdog, were contemplating withdrawing from the certification scheme if the body adopted Chikane’s controversial recommendation.

MOST POPULAR VOICES

THE government-controlled media continued to give widespread publicity to voices belonging to the ZANU PF arm of government compared to those of its coalition partners (See Fig. 2).

Although they appeared to have fairly accessed the views of the international community and commentators, these were quoted in the context of promoting the government media’s standpoint on national issues. Members of the international community were mostly quoted in the context of portraying them as confused on the issue of sanctions, or responsible for the country’s suffering, while most of the analysts vilified the West for refusing to remove sanctions.

The private media made greater efforts to access the views of all the coalition parties and independent commentators on national issues, especially constitutional reform.

Individually, Foreign Minister Samuel Mumbengegwi was the most frequently quoted in the government media. He was quoted 11 times mostly accusing the West of lacking commitment in restoring relations with Zimbabwe.

He was followed by Copac co-chairman Paul Mangwana and President Mugabe (nine times each), Prime Minister Tsvangirai and his deputy, Arthur Mutambara (eight times each), and Mines Minister Obert Mpofu (seven) discrediting international condemnation of Chikane’s report.

Mugabe, Tsvangirai and Mutambara were mostly quoted calling for peace and tolerance during COPAC’s outreach programme.

COPAC co-chairman Douglas Mwonzora was the most quoted individual in the private media (nine times), reflecting the dominance of the COPAC outreach exercise. These stories also included the voices of Mugabe and Tsvangirai (six times).

South African power sharing talks facilitation team member, Lindiwe Zulu, was also widely quoted (eight) denying Mugabe's earlier claim that the facilitation team was due to visit Zimbabwe.

Lawyer Trust Maanda, representing the detained director of the Centre for Research and Development NGO, Farai Maguwu, was also heard eight times. Maguwu was arrested and detained for the damning evidence about the mining of Chiadzwa's diamonds he allegedly gave to KPCS monitor Abbey Chikane, and Maanda was most widely quoted complaining about violations to his client's rights while in custody.

Fig 2: Voice distribution the media

Media	ZANU PF	MDC-T	MDC-M	Foreign diplomats	Alternative	Lawyers
Public media	77	22	13	19	10	0
Private media	29	41	11	38	63	18

Human rights violations

PERSISTENT human rights violations across the country vindicated concerns by commentators and civic groups over government's failure to eradicate the problem, which, they argued, discouraged Zimbabweans from participating in national political activities, especially the constitutional outreach programme.

The government-controlled media again declined to report the problem, leaving the responsibility to the private media, which recorded 11 new incidents in 43 stories.

Among them were:

- The alleged burning of homes belonging to MDC-T supporters by suspected ZANU PF activists to frighten them from participating in constitutional outreach programmes in Muzarabani (Studio 7 & *NewsDay*, 17/6),
- The banning of MDC-T's constitutional awareness meetings by ZANU PF activists in Maramba Pfungwe (Studio 7, 14/6),
- The arrest of five UZ students in Harare on unclear grounds (SW Radio Africa 18/6),
- The denial of detained Center for Research and Development director Farai Muguwu access to his lawyers and family (SW Radio Africa, 14/6), and
- The evictions of two commercial farmers, Trevor Gifford and Michel Fyd'herbe from their farms in Chipinge and the intimidation of another, Matthew Taylor, in Nyamandlovu (SW Radio Africa & *The Zimbabwean*, 14 & 17/6).

What they said...

“We don’t want violence. Please no quarrelling, no violence and no conflicts when we differ on political grounds” – President Mugabe at the launch of COPAC’s constitutional outreach consultation (*ZimOnline*, 17/6).

“The normalization of relations between Zimbabwe and Europe hinges on what Zimbabwe does. The benchmarks are set in the Global Political Agreement (GPA) and not by the EU. We want the (Zimbabwean) parties to act in good faith” –EU head of delegation to Zimbabwe, Xavier Marchal (*ZimOnline*, 17/6).

“Chiefs do not support ZANU PF, but they support its programmes, which we identify with, like land reform and indigenization. This land was stolen from chiefs and if ZANU PF comes through and says let’s reclaim the land, why can’t we support that?” - Chief Fortune Charumbira (*The Herald*, 14/6).

“We are going to deal with those peddling falsehoods to international organizations legally. These people are very lucky that they are in Zimbabwe. In some of these Western countries you cannot peddle falsehoods and get away with it.”- Mines Minister Obert Mpofu threatening action against Zimbabweans who assisted a Canadian based organisation, PAC, to compile a damning report on Chiadzwa (*The Herald*, 16/6).

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