

The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
Monday June 21st - Sunday June 27th 2010
Weekly Media Review 2010-24

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THE WEEK'S TOP STORIES

ADMINISTRATIVE chaos, which crippled the first week of the parliamentary constitutional select committee's national consultation exercise, meant to gather the aspirations of Zimbabweans in the new constitution, took centre stage in all the media this week.

While the government media publicized COPAC's administrative bungling, they censored cases of intimidation and political violence, which the private media and civic organizations reported to be on the increase.

The outcome of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme's meeting in Israel over the certification of Zimbabwe's controversial Chiadzwa diamonds, which the state-run media and the ZANU PF arm of government distorted, also generated significant interest, alongside Prime Minister Tsvangirai's decision to reshuffle his Cabinet ministers.

Fig 1: The most popular stories

Media	Constitutional reform	Chiadzwa diamonds	MDC-T politics	Human rights
State-run media	82	35	45	2
Private media	52	38	21	28
Total	134	73	66	30

Media expose COPAC's outreach chaos

ALL THE media highlighted logistical and administrative hurdles that blighted the start of the constitutional outreach programme.

Among them were the ongoing information drought, inadequate funding, shortage of transport, equipment and accommodation, low staff morale, chaotic accreditation, cancellation of meetings and low turnout.

Both the government and private media quoted a cross-section of the Zimbabwean society criticizing COPAC for having rolled out the outreach programme without adequate preparation. COPAC's decision to hold **"road shows"** to publicize the programme as a response to a huge public outcry over the lack of information (ZTV, 25/6, 8pm & *The Herald*, 28/6) and its management committee's meeting on June 29 to **"consider the future of the outreach programme..."** (*The Herald*, 29/6) exposed COPAC's lack of readiness and confusion.

Although the government media exposed administrative problems plaguing COPAC's outreach meetings in 44 of their 82 stories, they declined to report incidents of intimidation and political violence, which civic organizations say were being spearheaded by ZANU PF supporters and state security agents to coerce Zimbabweans, especially those in rural areas, to support ZANU PF's views on the new constitution. Thirteen stories (16%) were on ZANU PF's awareness activities and the remaining 25 were mostly calls by special interest groups for the promotion of their rights in the new constitution.

The Herald (25/6) suffocated the reasons why some meetings in Chinhoyi were aborted. It identified the shortage of equipment and the absence of the police to provide security as the major causes. The paper later (28/6) quoted COPAC co-chairman Douglas Mwonzora saying his committee had **"resolved problems in Chinhoyi"** and that the **"atmosphere"** in the town was now **"peaceful and people are speaking freely..."** without querying what he meant. It only emerged in the private media that political violence was the chief reason why the meetings were aborted. The *Zimbabwe Independent* (25/6) reported **"tension"** between ZANU PF and MDC-T supporters as having caused the abandonment while *The Zimbabwean On Sunday* (27/6) cited the alleged "vandalization" of one of COPAC's vehicles by suspected ZANU PF youths as proof of the violence.

In fact, 17 of the 52 private media's reports were on politically motivated violence emanating from the outreach programme. Twenty-three stories were on administrative problems and the remaining 10 were on calls by special interest groups and small political parties for the adoption of their views in the new supreme law.

Media provide little insight to MDC-T reshuffle

PRIME Minister Morgan Tsvangirai's reshuffle of the MDC-T component of Cabinet and other senior positions made headlines in all the media during the week.

Apart from publicizing the MDC-T's official reasons for the reshuffle, the government and private media speculated on what might have prompted the move. The government media, however, emphasized alleged MDC-T factionalism as the major reason for the shake-up, which saw four ministers being fired and five reassigned, while the private media cited incompetence, arguing that the move was justified and long overdue.

Although both the government and private media quoted Tsvangirai saying that the changes were designed to **"strengthen the performance of the MDC in government and outside government..."** (ZTV, 23/6, 8pm, *The Herald*, *Chronicle*, *NewsDay*, *The Financial Gazette*, 24/6), none of them challenged him to explain how the reshuffle would achieve this; the yardstick used to measure the performance of the fired ministers, or assessed the suitability of their replacements.

Twenty-four (53%) of the government media's reports, most of which were based on the views of pro-ZANU commentators and some leaders of smaller opposition parties, insisted that the reshuffle was a reflection of infighting. Seven publicized Tsvangirai's reasons, nine gave space to the affected ministers to express themselves and the remaining five were on the swearing-in of the new ministers.

Spot FM (25/6, 8pm) quoted Sikhala describing the move as a **"smokescreen of deeply entrenched problems"** in the MDC-T and a **"humiliation of key party members suspected to belong to the Biti faction"**, while *The Sunday Mail's* feature (27/7) concurred, viewing the reshuffle as a **"purge of a clique angling for the ouster of Mr Tsvangirai at the party's congress next year"**.

The private media gave diverse interpretation of Tsvangirai's Cabinet reshuffle.

While *ZimOnline* and *The Zimbabwean* stable passively endorsed Tsvangirai's reasons that the reshuffle was meant to strengthen the MDC-T and government and the impression that it was designed to weed out incompetent ministers, most of the private media either questioned the reasons or insisted that factionalism alongside inefficiency were the major causes. They quoted analysts questioning the criteria used to assess the efficiency of the ministers and questioning the qualities of their replacements.

ZimOnline & *The Zimbabwean On Sunday* (24 & 27/6) quoted analysts such as UZ political science lecturers, Eldred Masunungure and John Makumbe, arguing that the reshuffle was designed to **"strengthen"** Tsvangirai and his party **"ahead of future elections"** without asking them to clearly explain how this would be achieved.

State media propagate Chiadzwa ‘lies’

AS THE week drew to a close, the government media gave enormous publicity to claims by Mines Minister Obert Mpofu that the Kimberley Process group had given Zimbabwe the “green light” to sell its controversial Chiadzwa diamonds during its three-day intercessory meeting in Israel.

These falsehoods first emerged on ZBC (24/6, 8pm).

It “announced” that the KPCS had agreed to certify Chiadzwa’s diamonds, paving the way for Zimbabwe to auction its stockpile of over four million carats, mined by Mbada Diamonds and Canadile Miners, joint venture firms between the Zimbabwe government and South African investors on the disputed Chiadzwa claims. ZBC quoted Mpofu claiming that the country had received **“overwhelming support”** from **“most”** participants, most of them African countries as well as Russia, China, Brazil, India and the United Arab Emirates, claiming that 71 out of 75 countries represented at the meeting **“strongly supported”** the **“immediate”** auctioning of the gems.

In an attempt to conceal the fact that the meeting ended in a deadlock – and therefore no agreement on the certification of the Chiadzwa gems – ZBC (26/6, 8pm) passively quoted Mpofu accusing two global civic organizations of attempting to bribe the country’s representatives at the meeting in exchange for support without providing proof. The same story appeared in *The Sunday Mail* as its front-page lead.

The private media provided a more honest picture of what transpired at the KP meeting. They reported the KP as having reached a deadlock over Chiadzwa diamonds; a development, which the KP said was unprecedented in its 10-year history. The *Zimbabwe Independent* (25/6) reported the dispute as having been referred to a special meeting in Russia in mid-July and insisted that the KP’s deadlock meant that Zimbabwe was **“now stuck”** with its controversial diamonds. The story also reported that the deadlock vindicated concerns over the credibility of KP monitor Abby Chikane’s recommendations.

MOST POPULAR VOICES

ZANU PF’s views on topical issues, especially constitutional reforms, dominated the government media in the week.

The party was accessed for comment 82 times compared to its coalition partners [MDC-T (42) and MDC-M (10)]. Although the government media accessed comment from commentators (37 times), most of them were pro-ZANU PF “analysts” such as turncoat ZANU PF MP Jonathan Moyo, and Gabriel Chaibva, who were heard either vilifying the West for allegedly attempting to block Zimbabwe selling its diamonds or depicting the MDC-T as riddled by divisions and on the verge of collapse. To its credit, the government media gave substantial space to ordinary Zimbabweans to speak on various issues, particularly the shambolic constitutional consultative outreach programme, reflecting their effort to expose COPAC’s administrative shortcomings.

The MDC-T (72) was the most quoted party in the private media, reflecting these media's tendency to report topical issues mostly from the MDC-T's perspective. ZANU PF (24) and the Arthur Mutambara-led MDC formation (15) trailed. However, the private media widely accessed independent views (64) and those of the international community (30) on various issues.

MINES Minister Obert Mpofu was the most quoted individual in the government-controlled media (25 times), reflecting the importance these media gave to his claims that the KP group had agreed to certify the Chiadzwa diamonds, as well as saying Zimbabwe would start selling its diamonds soon.

COPAC co-chairmen, Paul Mangwana (20 times), Douglas Mwonzora (11) and Edward Mkhosi (seven) followed, mainly quoted defending the chaotic outreach programme.

Prime Minister Tsvangirai (six) completed the list. He was heard justifying his decision to reshuffle MDC-T ministers.

Mwonzora led the pack in the private media.

He was quoted eight times, followed by KP chairperson Boaz Hirsch (six), Tinoziva Bere (five), a lawyer representing detained director for the Centre for Research and Development (CRD) Farai Maguwu, and Obert Mpofu (four). Mwonzora was heard defending the outreach meetings, while Hirsch was announcing the KP's failure to reach an agreement over Chiadzwa. Bere was quoted complaining about violations of his client's rights, and Mpofu misrepresenting the KP's position.

HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

Constitutional outreach fuels violence

A FRESH wave of political violence, which appeared to have been sparked by the beginning of the constitutional outreach programme, received significant coverage in the private media. The state-run media censored this problem in line with their thrust to conceal news that tarnishes government's reputation, including the credibility of ongoing constitutional reforms. Their two reports were denials of the existence of violence by COPAC and ZANU PF. The private media recorded 18 new incidents in 28 stories, reflecting a 64 percent increase from last week. Sixteen (89%) of them were connected to the outreach programme.

Among them were:

- Coercion of Buhera villagers to attend ZANU PF meetings where they were indoctrinated to support ZANU PF's views on the new constitution and intimidation of Chimanimani villagers to do the same (SW Radio Africa, Studio 7 & *ZimOnline*, 21 & 22/6).
- The disruption of outreach consultative meetings by soldiers in Karoi. The soldiers were also reported to be threatening "**war**" on residents who would give different views from those of ZANU PF during the meetings. A senior army official, identified

as Major Badza, reportedly made similar threats in Chivi. (SW Radio Africa & Studio 7, 24 & 25/6).

- The burning of four homes belonging to MDC-T supporters by suspected ZANU PF activists in Mudzi (SW Radio Africa, 24/6).
- Abduction of three MDC-T youths by suspected ZANU PF supporters and state security agents in Mashonaland East (SW Radio Africa, Studio 7 & *NewsDay*, 24 & 25/6), and
- The banning of MDC-T supporters from attending outreach meetings by war veterans and soldiers in Mutare North (Studio 7, 24/6).

FOR THE RECORD

THE Sunday Mail's features' editor Lovemore Chikova claimed that recalled Energy Minister Elias Mudzuri ***"burst into Parliament after the 2000 general election and was among the most prominent opposition legislators"***. As a matter of fact Mudzuri did not become an MP in 2000; he only became one after the 2008 harmonized polls when he won the Warren Park seat.

WHAT THEY SAID...

"To me it was a great elevation, a promotion from being an ordinary MP into being a fully-fledged minister. Then...to be reassigned to another junior position, albeit in the party, is a demotion" – fired MDC-T National Housing Minister, Fidelis Mhashu (ZTV, 24/6, 8pm).

"It does not seem this (constitutional outreach programme) was adequately planned, there is just not enough information on the programme. I do not know why it was decided to start it when everything was not in order" – Marondera resident Abednigo Razerera (*The Herald*, 29/6).

"As far as we (ZANU PF) are concerned the constitution-making process is going on well. We have not received any reports on intimidation and violence..." – ZANU PF spokesman Rugare Gumbo (*NewsDay*, 29/6).

Ends/

The MEDIA REVIEW was 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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