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ZIMBABWE

Nothing about the Zimbabwean media environment has improved in the last year. Repressive media laws such as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), Public Order and Security Act, Broadcasting Services Act, and Interception of Communications Act are still used—separately and collectively—to gag alternative sources of information. The country is still without truly private daily newspapers, radio, or television stations. Journalists continue to be harassed, unlawfully detained, tortured, and/or murdered.

Like all sectors of Zimbabwean industry, the media sector has fallen victim to the country's economic distress, marked by world-record hyperinflation, dilapidated infrastructure, and commodity shortages. Media members have been affected in their ability to gather and publish adequate information for the benefit of their consumers.

Of significance on the political front is the historic harmonized presidential and parliamentary elections of March 29, 2008. For the first time since independence, the Zimbabwe African National Union/Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) party lost its majority in parliament to the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

Morgan Tsvangirai of the MDC outpolled Robert Mugabe of ZANU PF in a presidential election on March 29, but did not get sufficient votes to avoid a run-off in June. Mugabe claimed to have won the run-off after Tsvangirai pulled out of the race, citing unprecedented violence and intimidation against his supporters. The election was roundly condemned locally and internationally as a sham.

In light of this, Mugabe's re-election lacked legitimacy. After protracted negotiations mediated by former South African president Thabo Mbeki, the rival politicians signed an agreement to form a unified government on September 15, 2008.

While the leaders' efforts to put aside their differences in the interest of the nation should be applauded, of major concern is Article XIX of the agreement, "Freedom of Expression and Communication." Although the article acknowledges the need for a free media environment, it fails substantially to meet international standards of media freedom and is silent on repealing repressive media laws. The article also recommends that external radio broadcasts from foreign media be stopped. Whether or not the power-sharing era will lead to the opening up of media space remains to be seen. For now, repressive laws continue to be applied with full force, despite calls for extensive and meaningful media law reforms.

Reflecting the lack of development in the country, the overall score decreased slightly to 1.15 from 1.27 last year. A few of the objective scores remained more or less the same, while the decrease in score is mostly attributable to losses in Objective 1, Freedom of Speech, and Objective 4, Business Management. The relatively higher scores for Objectives 4—despite the lower score this year—and 5 (Supporting Institutions) offer some hope that should the legal situation change, media have a chance to rebound and better serve citizens as the country, hopefully, turns itself around.

ZIMBABWE AT A GLANCE

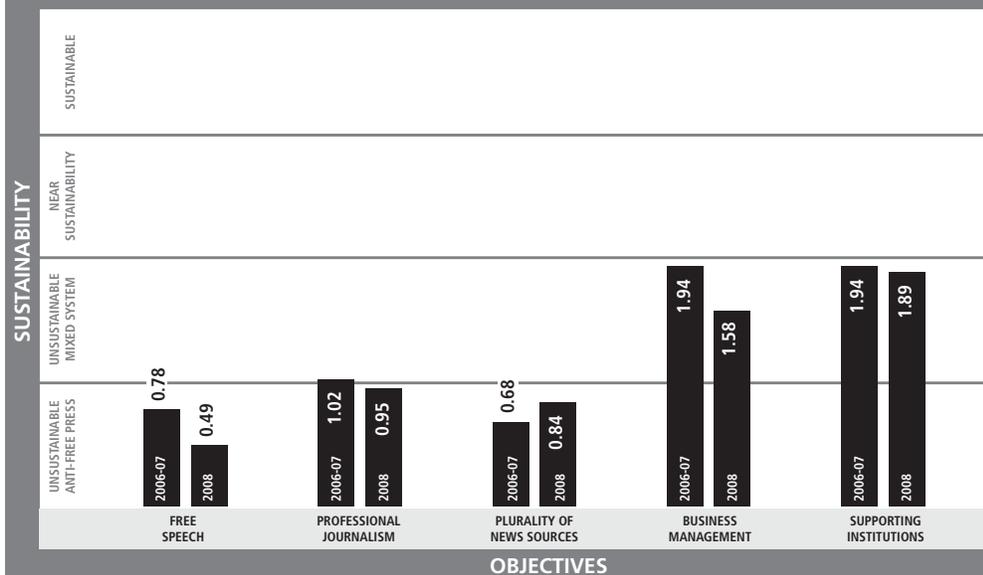
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 11,392,629 (July 2009 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Harare
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** African 98% (Shona 82%, Ndebele 14%, other 2%), other 2% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** syncretism (part Christian, part indigenous beliefs) 50%, Christian 25%, indigenous beliefs 24%, Muslim and other 1% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** English (official), Shona, Sindebele, numerous but minor tribal dialects (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2007-Atlas):** \$4.466 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2009)
- > **GNI per capita (2007-PPP):** \$340 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2009)
- > **Literacy rate:** 90.7% (male 94.2%, female 87.2%) (2003 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** Executive President Robert Gabriel Mugabe (since December 31, 1987)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Print: 15 total, mostly in Harare and Bulawayo; Radio: 4 main stations, with several other local ones that broadcast for a few hours a day; Television stations 1 (ZTV-state-owned)
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** Top two by circulation: *The Herald* (state-owned), *The Chronicle* (state-owned)
- > **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** New Ziana (state-owned)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 1.351 million (2007 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: ZIMBABWE



Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0-1):

Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2):

Country minimally meets objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. Evident progress in free-press advocacy, increased professionalism, and new media businesses may be too recent to judge sustainability.

Near Sustainability (2-3):

Country has progressed in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism, and the business environment supportive of independent media. Advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice. However, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable.

Sustainable (3-4):

Country has media that are considered generally professional, free, and sustainable, or to be approaching these objectives. Systems supporting independent media have survived multiple governments, economic fluctuations, and changes in public opinion or social conventions.

OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Zimbabwe Objective Score: 0.49

The score for this objective fell notably from 0.78 to a rather dismal 0.49, reflecting the antipathy of the government to a free press. Six indicators received lower scores, driving the overall score down. Only three indicators remained unchanged: Indicator 2 (broadcast licensing)—which was already hovering near a zero—, Indicator 5 (legal guarantees of editorial independence for state broadcasters), and Indicator 8 (media access to foreign news sources). Indicator 8 was also the only one to score above 1.00, coming in more than a point higher than the overall score.

The Zimbabwe constitution has provisions guaranteeing freedom of expression, but these are made insignificant by other more restrictive laws. Many private media practitioners have been harassed, prosecuted, and forced to shut down. The MSI panelists noted also the government has not enacted legislation to make accessible the protections guaranteed in the constitution. “Zimbabwe today is a minefield for any journalist,” said panelist Irene Petras of Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights. “No codified law [exists] to guide practice; hence, the government manipulates this to curtail the freedom of journalists. There is no protection of journalists.”

The panelists gave the example of the editor of *The Standard* newspaper, a weekly independent, who was arrested in May 2008 and detained overnight for publishing an article written by a political opposition leader.

The panelists were concerned about the manipulation and political interference by government in the affairs of the state media. The ruling party appoints print and broadcast media senior staff, thereby stripping the state media of any autonomy or independence. “State media does not allow for liberal thinking and is very frustrating, especially to junior practitioners,” Petras said.

The government has selectively applied a law aimed at curtailing the operations of private media. Broadcast licensing is not carried out fairly. Though amendments were made to the Broadcast Services Act in December 2007 to allow for licensing of more media outlets, not a single license has been issued since then.

Panelist Foster Dongozi from the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ) said that state media invariably receive preferential treatment over private media. He contrasted this scenario with an example of presidential visits to countries such as Nigeria. That country’s events are open to all journalists with no selective invitations, he said.

Entry into media is very difficult, due to a discriminatory accreditation and registration process. Under AIPPA, media institutions must register with the Zimbabwe Media Commission (formerly the Media and Information Commission). Journalists must be accredited to be able to work for different media organizations. Foreign journalists are required to partner with local media outlets, and this restricts those journalists from practicing in the country.

Media outlets also have burdensome tax obligations. Panelist Angela Makamure from the Federation of African Media Women-Zimbabwe cited the example of the recent listing of newspapers under luxury goods. She also stated that because of this burdensome tax regime, independent weeklies such as *The Zimbabwean* have seen circulation reduced from 200,000 to 60,000 copies.

The panelists also noted that crimes against journalists and media practitioners are dealt with in a biased and unprofessional manner. Dongozi said that many journalists are arrested but then released without charge. He noted that of all the assault cases with which he is familiar, only one has resulted in a conviction. Jaan Raath, a locally based correspondent for the *UK Times*, said that this year alone, numerous abductions, assaults, and arbitrary arrests of media personnel were witnessed, and one journalist was murdered.

“Journalists are not at all secure in this country—in particular, those perceived to be against the state,” said panelist Jestina Mukoko, director of Zimbabwe Peace Project. “There have been a number of journalists targeted. For example, Brian

LEGAL AND SOCIAL NORMS PROTECT AND PROMOTE FREE SPEECH AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION.

FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

- > Legal and social protections of free speech exist and are enforced.
- > Licensing of broadcast media is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
- > Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
- > Crimes against journalists or media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
- > State or public media do not receive preferential legal treatment, and law guarantees editorial independence.
- > Libel is a civil law issue; public officials are held to higher standards, and offended parties must prove falsity and malice.
- > Public information is easily accessible; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Media outlets have unrestricted access to information; this is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Entry into the journalism profession is free, and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

Hungwe, Frank Chikoore, Tsvangirai Mukwazhi, and recently, a female journalist of one of the private weeklies were assaulted for taking pictures of people in queues.”

The participants agreed that access to international news is not as restricted. Although state media controls release of foreign news and usually limits the release, journalists can access the same information through the Internet and they may reprint and rebroadcast it.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Zimbabwe Objective Score: 0.95

Very little changed in the state of this objective. The score remained much the same, with movement in only one indicator: Indicator 6 (balance of entertainment and news) received a somewhat lower score from the panelists. All indicators received scores similar to the overall objective score, with the exception of Indicator 5 (pay levels for journalists), which was nearly three-quarters of a point lower.

Zimbabwean reporting is not fair, well sourced, or objective. Panelists blamed a lack of financial, infrastructure, and human resources. Mukoko said that Zimbabwe’s public and private media are pigeonholed as either belonging to the status quo or advocating for regime change. Private media are better in terms of professionalism and objectivity, but they have limited access to state and public information, and some journalists sensationalize stories. Because most media outlets do not have sufficient resources to investigate and cover reports, they usually publish poorly sourced reports.

JOURNALISM MEETS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF QUALITY.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM INDICATORS:

- > Reporting is fair, objective, and well sourced.
- > Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards.
- > Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship.
- > Journalists cover key events and issues.
- > Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are sufficiently high to discourage corruption.
- > Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming.
- > Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient.
- > Quality niche reporting and programming exists (investigative, economics/business, local, political).

Panelists agreed that journalists in Zimbabwe do not follow recognized and accepted ethical standards. Most journalists are compromised because they accept bribes as a way of trying to make ends meet with their low salaries. Panelist Takura Zhangazha, the director of Media Institute of Southern Africa - Zimbabwe, said that private media try to follow ethical standards as much as possible, but the state media tend to follow unfair political codes of ethics.

Due to continued victimization and systematic targeting of journalists and media houses, media in Zimbabwe tend to self-censor as a form of protection. As John Masuku, executive director of Radio Voice of the People, described: “Editors in government-controlled media practice self-censorship. Most stories about the opposition and individuals perceived [as] controversial are not covered. Journalists in government-controlled media cover most of the state-sponsored events, and coverage of civil society and the private sector is treated with caution.”

The same can be said about key events—state media do not cover them impartially. Henry Muradzikwa, the immediate-past chief executive of Zimbabwe Broadcasting Services, characterized the coverage of local and world events as a monopoly of the private press, with the state media always seeking to give a pro-government slant and outright misinformation and propaganda. Panelists said that the private media always strive to cover most key events, although they are challenged by limited access to government and ZANU PF proceedings. Panelist Angela Makamure said that journalists tend to cover mostly political and business events while neglecting social and developmental issues.

The panelists agreed that pay levels for journalists are dismal, thereby negatively impacting the quality of work that journalists produce. Dongozi said that most journalists have to take up other jobs to meet their financial needs. The end result has been that most journalists submit sub-standard reports to their media houses while selling well-sourced reports to foreign media houses, which pay better. Low levels of remuneration have also promoted corruption and have seriously eroded the ethical standards of journalism.

The panelists agreed that Zimbabwean media houses use antiquated equipment. Muradzikwa said that both private and public media lack equipment and facilities, but the situation is worse with the national broadcaster, as the state provides inadequate resources except during the national election period. Private media institutions do not have facilities adequate to cover the whole of the country, and as a result, their reports are usually limited to urban areas.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Zimbabwe Objective Score: 0.84

The score for this objective improved marginally, but remained within the category of “unsustainable.” The improvement mostly came from slightly better scores for a few indicators: Indicator 1 (plurality of news sources), 5 (independent broadcasters produce their own news), and 7 (coverage of minority issues). Only Indicator 3 (objectivity of state media) stood out for not scoring within a half-point of the overall objective score; it received a score well below.

Due to the hyper-inflationary environment, newspapers have become expensive and unaffordable to many. Among the print media, the state dominates, with a daily and a weekly edition. The private media is only for the political elite, according to panelist Rutendo Mawere, a journalist for *The Standard*. Mukoko agreed, and added that most people do not have television sets, although a number of communities have benefited from shortwave radios sourced by NGOs.

The panel noted the prohibitively high cost for citizens in accessing domestic or international media. Some rural communities do not have television or radio signals for the local state channels. Masuku said that satellite dishes are only affordable for the higher class, and the Internet is available to a very small percentage of urban dwellers. Mukoko also explained that the notorious Interceptions of Communications Act is a threat to Internet communication.

MULTIPLE NEWS SOURCES PROVIDE CITIZENS WITH RELIABLE AND OBJECTIVE NEWS.

PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

- > A plurality of affordable public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet) exists.
- > Citizens’ access to domestic or international media is not restricted.
- > State or public media reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
- > Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media.
- > Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs.
- > Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates.
- > A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources.

While it is not against the law for citizens to access foreign news, there have been incidences of people being harassed, intimidated, and at times assaulted for possessing private weeklies, foreign newspapers, and shortwave radios. Shortly after the March 29 general election, ZANU PF activists went around the high-density suburbs instructing people to take down their satellite dishes.

The panel was concerned that state media, which is always widely available, reflects the views of the ruling party and government. Panelist Raphael Khumalo of Zimbabwe Independent Publishers said that all broadcasting media is state-controlled and does not reflect the opinions of the majority of Zimbabweans. The views reflected are those of the ruling elite and those close to it. He also said that even the state print media is deliberately and unashamedly partisan.

International news agencies operating within Zimbabwe are mainly print agencies—for instance, Reuters, AP, and AFP. Major international electronic news broadcasters such as CNN, BBC, and Sky News have been denied access to cover Zimbabwe. For broadcast, only those perceived to be favorable and friendly in their reporting, such as Al-Jazeera and SABC, are licensed to operate locally.

Public knowledge of who owns what media house is not ubiquitous, but there is an understanding that the government owns most of the media in a very non-transparent arrangement, according to Zhangazha. The panelists agreed that this non-transparency allows for, and perpetuates, political manipulation of the Zimbabwean media.

Minority language media exists and is legal. Makamure noted that even though this is the case, most minority languages are not covered in the print media. However, broadcast media does cater to them, through radio stations such as National FM and Radio Zimbabwe.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Zimbabwe Objective Score: 1.58

This objective suffered a noticeable decline in score from 1.94 to 1.58, mostly due to lower scores in Indicator 4 (ratio of advertising to other revenue) and Indicator 5 (government subsidy of private media). Only Indicator 5 scored more than a half-point higher than the overall score; all other indicators fell within a half a point.

Panelists agreed that the private media and their urban distribution partners are generally well managed. According

to Zhangazha, independent media operate as profit-making enterprises in a very competitive business environment riddled with price controls and shortages of raw materials, among other constraints.

The private media is not subsidized by the state, and as such, it works hard to ensure that companies make enough profits to continue operations. Panelists noted that there is a high risk that agendas for private media are set by their sources of finance. Mukoko said that the public media are not operating efficiently because of political interference, and as a result, they hardly have enough profit generated to ensure that their employees are paid well.

Private media receive revenue from a multitude of sources, including supplements and advertising. The same cannot be said of the state media—it relies on state funding.

Most private media depend on revenue from advertisements. Panelist Irene Petras noted that more and more advertisements are appearing, especially in the print media, at the expense of news reports. She explained that the economic situation has made this unavoidable, despite the negative impact.

Advertisers in Zimbabwe are grouped together under advertising and marketing associations. Advertising agencies are free to support whichever media they deem fit, depending on the media's readership. Some market research was conducted in the past, but to date, no studies have been able to establish the needs and interests of consumers. The panelists acknowledged the Zimbabwe All Media Product Survey, but expressed concern that its findings lack detail and analysis.

INDEPENDENT MEDIA ARE WELL-MANAGED BUSINESSES, ALLOWING EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:

- > Media outlets and supporting firms operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses.
- > Media receive revenue from a multitude of sources.
- > Advertising agencies and related industries support an advertising market.
- > Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with accepted standards at commercial outlets.
- > Independent media do not receive government subsidies.
- > Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor products to the needs and interests of audiences.
- > Broadcast ratings and circulation figures are reliably and independently produced.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Zimbabwe Objective Score: 1.89

The state of Objective 5 remained effectively unchanged based upon the panelists' scores. Indicator 3 (NGOs supporting the media) received a lower score, but, along with Indicator 2 (professional associations), it still scored more than a half-point higher than the objective score. All other indicators remained unchanged and scored close to the overall objective score.

Zimbabwe has a number of NGOs working to support free speech. Some are media organizations such as MISA, the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ), and ZUJ. Some are human rights organizations that advocate for free speech and media freedoms as a cornerstone for democracy. Such organizations have been advocating for the repeal of laws that restrict media freedoms.

Zimbabwe does have schools that offer college-level education in journalism. "Zimbabwe has been very lucky to be able to provide degree programs of high quality, but the progress has been hampered by the same problems affecting most tertiary institutions," Mukoko said.

One such problem is the large number of qualified and experienced teaching personnel who have left for greener pastures outside the country. In addition, training facilities for media students are inadequate. For instance, some institutions offer courses in broadcasting, yet they do not have studios available for students to gain practical experience.

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS FUNCTION IN THE PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA.

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

- > Trade associations represent the interests of private media owners and provide member services.
- > Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights.
- > NGOs support free speech and independent media.
- > Quality journalism degree programs that provide substantial practical experience exist.
- > Short-term training and in-service training programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
- > Sources of newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and unrestricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.

Short-term training courses are available and are attended mostly by local journalists. Those conducted by international organizations are open to all, but few Zimbabwean journalists attend, due to restrictive costs and the reluctance of employers to release staff for extended periods of time. Organizations including MISA have provided training for journalists. But journalists working for state media hardly benefit, as the state perceives NGOs as political opponents and does not allow its employees to attend.

Although private media can access newsprint and they own their own printing facilities, most print jobs are done outside Zimbabwe. This has huge cost implications, affecting the price of paper and restricting circulation and access. Sources of newsprint are not entirely in private hands. Very few entities have their own dedicated source, and as a result, private media have difficulty meeting deadlines at times.

Broadcast transmitters are solely in the hands of the state. Although Internet kiosks are privately owned and managed, the prices are exorbitant and restrictive, and the kiosks are concentrated only in urban areas. The growth of Internet cafés has been tremendous, and the state has neither the resources nor the technical skill to control the flow of information in such places.

List of Panel Participants

Angela Makamure, national director, Federation of African Media Women Zimbabwe, Harare

Foster Dongozi, journalist, Zimbabwe Union of Journalists, Harare

Takura Zhangazha, director, Media Institute for Southern Africa, Harare

Henry Muradzikwa, former chief executive officer, Zimbabwe Broadcasting Holdings and Zimbabwe Television, Harare

Irene Petras, director, Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, Harare

John Masuku, director, Voice of the People Radio Station, Harare

Jan Raath, correspondent, *UK Times*, Harare

Raphael Khumalo, editor, *Zimbabwe Independent*, Harare

Rutendo Mawere, journalist, *The Standard*, Gweru

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The Zimbabwe study was coordinated by, and conducted in partnership with, Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe.