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ZIMBABWE

The 2010 panel discussion was held in the context of continued bickering and stalemate within an increasingly dysfunctional coalition government, deflating hopes that the coalition, formed in 2009, might bring positive change. While the Global Political Agreement (GPA) mandated that the coalition government implement legislative and institutional reforms, no meaningful or tangible progress had yet been made when the panel met to discuss Zimbabwe's media sustainability. Instead, the government launched a fresh series of steps to increase its control over the media.

Zimbabweans' constitutional rights to free expression still depend upon and are impeded by the whims of a government empowered by a plethora of repressive media laws that hinder free access to information. Such excessive and bureaucratic controls over the media are unwarranted in a democratic society, noted the MSI panelists, and violate the provisions of accepted protocols on freedom of expression. The government-controlled daily newspapers remain partisan in their coverage, spewing constant criticism of civil society and the coalition partners of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), though circulation is limited to the main cities, and prices are too high for most Zimbabweans.

On a positive note, the Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC) at last moved to register 15 new media outlets and independent newspapers, among them four dailies, bringing to an end a seven-year monopoly of the daily print media market by the state-controlled Zimpapers.

Despite this encouraging measure, the dominant state-controlled public broadcaster continues to provide a distorted and biased news service, particularly against the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party, despite the MDC's status as an equal partner in the coalition. The country's primary broadcast media law, the Broadcasting Services Act, is restrictive, and appointment of board members to the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ), a body responsible for regulating the airwaves, is unilateral and irregular. There has been no progress in the broadcasting sector over the past year, and no independent domestic radio and television broadcasters have been granted operating licenses. Consequently, the Zimbabwean community, particularly those living in marginalized areas, lack adequate and credible information.

At the time this MSI panel met, the coalition government partners appeared to be readying for a constitutional referendum and election. Meanwhile, reforms laid out under the GPA have not been implemented, and political and media space remains restricted in flagrant breach of African Union and SADC principles for free and fair elections.

# ZIMBABWE AT A GLANCE

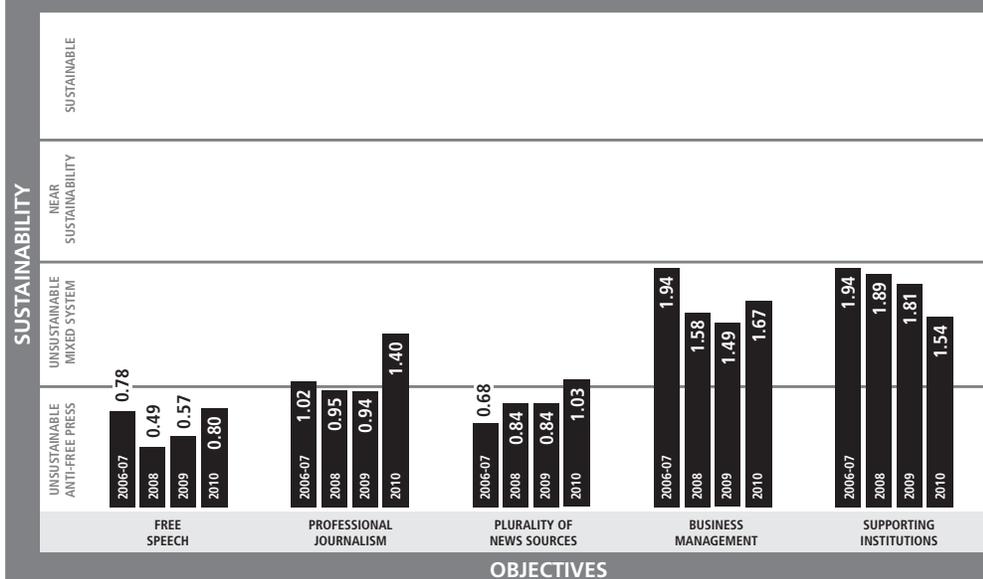
## GENERAL

- > **Population:** 12,619,600 (July 2011 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Harare
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** African 98% (Shona 82%, Ndebele 14%, other 2%), mixed and Asian 1%, white less than 1% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** syncretic (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 (2010-Atlas):** \$5.841 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2011)
- > **GNI per capita (2010-Atlas):** \$460 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2011)
- > **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 Stations: 4 main, with several other local ones that broadcast for a few hours a day; Television Stations: 1 (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:** 1,423,000 (2009 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: 0.80

Displaying the panelists' fading optimism that the coalition government would spell significant progress for the media, most of the Objective 1 indicator scores remained below a score of 1.00, therefore in the anti-free press range of the MSI scale. Exceptions include indicators 8 (the media's access to foreign and domestic news sources) and 9 (entry into the profession), which scored slightly better, more than a point and half a point, respectively. The overall average for Objective 1 improved modestly over last year's overall score for the objective (0.57), but still puts it one of the worst in all of Africa.

The low score of Objective 1 demonstrates that Zimbabwe is far from implementing legal and social mechanisms that protect and promote free speech and access to public information. The scores likewise reflect the government's lack of political will to ensuring free access to public information and free expression. Legally, Zimbabwe's constitution states that everyone has the right to enjoy freedom of expression, yet it falls short of expressly providing for media or press freedom.

The panelists noted that laws that undermine free speech, such as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), Public Order and Security Act (POSA), Interception to Communications Act (ICA), Broadcasting

#### 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.

Services Act (BSA), and Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act, among others, remain intact despite the inclusive government. Regrettably, no legislative reforms to repeal or amend repressive laws are forthcoming, despite the attempt by one MDC MP to amend POSA.

Jan Raath, the Zimbabwe-based correspondent for London-based *The Times*, feels that legal protections of free speech are present but extremely limited. He points out that aggrieved parties have the right to pursue legal recourse if their free-speech rights are infringed.

Despite the government's assurances to open the airwaves, Zimbabwe still has only one state-owned public broadcaster and no alternatives. There is no diversity in broadcasting. Raath added that foreign radio stations broadcasting into Zimbabwe are illegal "pirate radio stations" under Article IX of the Global Political Agreement (GPA). John Gambanga, media director for the Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe, said that the financial requirements to establish a new broadcast station are prohibitive.

Others agreed that the uniformity in broadcasting stems from the painfully bureaucratic license application process. Kudzai Kwangwari, a program officer for a local community radio advocacy group, described such hurdles, noting that his organization applied initially to the Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC), only to be referred to the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ). Even if successful, their application would then have to be registered with the Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) to receive a broadcasting frequency.

Rutendo Mawere, a journalist from independent weekly newspaper *The Standard*, concluded that market entry is restricted to licenses granted on the basis of political affiliation. Furthermore, the general consensus of the panelists is that market entry and the tax structure are restrictive in comparison with other industries. The legal requirements are stringent, and taxes to import equipment are high.

The panelists all agreed that crimes against journalists and media outlets are still commonplace in Zimbabwe. The safety of journalists, particularly those from the independent press, is precarious. Gambanga said that journalists who cover politically sensitive issues in Zimbabwe risk harassment and arrest.

Nunurai Jena, a freelance journalist, also underlined concerns about retribution via arrests, intimidation, and harassment. Patricia Magorokosho, a program officer for the Federation of African Media Women-Zimbabwe (FAMWZ), agreed, noting the continued arrest and harassment of Woman of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) members by police. Magorokosho

tied these incidents to rising self-censorship among Zimbabwean journalists.

In one case, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reported that a telephone death threat from a high-ranking police officer forced a freelance journalist, Stanley Kwenda, a contributor to the private weekly *The Zimbabwean*, to flee the country. According to Kwenda's paper, the caller identified himself as Chief Superintendent Chrispen Makedenge, and he allegedly said that Kwenda would be dead by the weekend in connection with an article in *The Zimbabwean* that quoted relatives of Makedenge's late wife making critical comments about Makedenge.<sup>1</sup>

Journalists and media organizations do protest the arrests and harassment of media professionals. Following a spate of arrests, IFEX in December 2010 reported that MISA and more than 100 journalists united to petition the prime minister to stop harassing the media. The arrests included the case of Nqobani Ndlovu, who was arrested for nine days and charged with defamation over an article that "alleged that the police were recruiting war veterans loyal to Mugabe's ZANU-PF party to take over senior posts ahead of next year's elections."<sup>2</sup>

The MISA Trust Fund Board also spoke up about crimes against journalists, noting, "We have recorded a decrease in the number of attacks on, and arrests of, journalists in Zimbabwe. Notwithstanding this, we call upon the government to ensure the safety of media workers who still face legal and extra-legal threats from perpetrators of media freedom and free-expression violations. We further urge you to drop any legal cases pending against media workers or citizens charged for exercising their right to freedom of expression."<sup>3</sup>

Regarding the question of preferential treatment for the public media, as noted in last year's MSI, the information ministry interferes with the work of the public media, rendering editorial independence nonexistent.

Libel remains a criminal offense in Zimbabwe, punishable by prison terms in cases involving the president or the publication of information considered prejudicial to the state.

In one especially high-profile case in the past year, first lady Grace Mugabe sued the independent weekly *The Standard* for \$15 million after it quoted a US diplomatic cable leaked by Wikileaks that accused her of profiting from diamond trafficking. Expressing its outrage over the case, Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) said, "It highlights the dangers of reporting compromising allegations about senior officials or people linked to the government in Zimbabwe. Grace Mugabe did not think twice about abusing her position in an attempt to cripple this newspaper." RSF added that the case illustrates the government's attempt to "strangle critical news media financially." RSF said, "Suing *The Standard* for such an exorbitant sum in damages is tantamount to forcing it to shut down."<sup>4</sup>

The government continues to tighten its grip on official sources of information. In October 2010, the government revealed its intent to further restrict access to information, via a new law, the "General Law Amendment Bill." RSF called for the withdrawal of the bill, which it said would give the authorities broad power to block public access to official documents, including judicial decisions and public records. According to comments by the RSF secretary-general, Jean-François Julliard, "The bill is extremely dangerous, as it would allow the authorities to adopt unjust measures without anyone knowing and without anyone being able to protest. It shows that the government is rejecting transparency in favor of secrecy and abuse of authority."<sup>5</sup>

Although state media control the release of foreign news, information is available on the Internet and reprint or rebroadcast reports. However, the government's efforts to ban foreign radio stations that it has labeled "pirate" radio stations threatens the media's access to foreign news sources.

As noted in the *African Media Barometer: Zimbabwe 2010*, the accreditation of journalists with the Media Commission has not been compulsory since 2007. However, press cards are issued, and journalists must be accredited to visit parliament or other institutions and to attend official events. The *African Media Barometer* also noted, "The commission can impose sanctions on a journalist who 'abuses his or her journalistic privilege' by suspending the accreditation for up to three months."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Journalist Flees Zimbabwe After Death Threat." Committee to Protect Journalists, January 20, 2010. Available at: <http://www.cpj.org/2010/01/journalist-flees-zimbabwe-after-death-threat.php> as of September 2, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> "Journalists' arrests raise concerns." IFEX: December 8, 2010. Available online at: <http://www.ifex.org/zimbabwe/2010/12/08/arrests/> as of September 2, 2011. The full text of the letter is also available online: [http://www.ifex.org/zimbabwe/2010/11/30/zimbabwe\\_petition.pdf](http://www.ifex.org/zimbabwe/2010/11/30/zimbabwe_petition.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> "MISA Trust Fund Board (TFB) statement on media developments and challenges in Zimbabwe." Media Institute of Southern Africa, 2010. Available on the MISA website: <http://www.misa.org/mediarelease/archieve%202010/AGM2010.html> as of September 2, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> "First lady sues weekly for quoting WikiLeaks cable." RSF/IFEX: December 23, 2010. Available at the IFEX website: [http://www.ifex.org/zimbabwe/2010/12/23/diamond\\_cables/](http://www.ifex.org/zimbabwe/2010/12/23/diamond_cables/) as of September 2, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> "Bill would restrict public access to official information, says RSF." RSF/IFEX: November 22, 2010. Available online at: [http://www.ifex.org/zimbabwe/2010/11/22/general\\_law\\_amendment\\_bill/](http://www.ifex.org/zimbabwe/2010/11/22/general_law_amendment_bill/) as of September 2, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> *African Media Barometer: Zimbabwe 2010*: p. 20. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2010. Available at <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/simbabwe/07539.pdf> as of September 2, 2011.

## OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

### Zimbabwe Objective Score: 1.40

Most of the indicators in Objective 2 (adherence to professional standards of journalism) scored between 1.00 and 2.00. The sole exception was indicator 6 (balance of entertainment and news), which scored nearly a point higher than the objective score. The score of 1.40 for this objective indicates that professional standards of journalism remain extremely low.

Valentine Maponga, a Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) program manager and media practitioner, noted that a significant number of Zimbabwean news articles rely on unnamed sources, and verification of facts and authenticity is difficult. Magorogosho added that few women are considered credible sources of information, and in most cases victims are not allowed to respond.

However, Raath feels that independent media in Zimbabwe try to be fair and balanced. In addition, Mawere noted that while private media try to be fair and objective, lack of access to public information and sources makes it difficult to maintain quality. Some blame for poor reporting, the panelists agreed, must be attributed to the lack of proper training of journalists.

According to Magorokosho, media organizations and associations have developed their own ethical standards. For instance, the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) has its own clearly defined code of ethics, while the Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe (VMCZ) has another. The panelists seemed to agree that journalists are aware of

ethical standards of journalism but are far from implementing them. For example, bribery is a serious issue, particularly among public-media journalists, which the panelists believe is connected to the low salaries they earn.

Self-censorship is pervasive, and the general view of the panelists is that journalists in Zimbabwe self-censor to avoid hostility from the state. Maponga noted that journalists live in constant fear of intimidation and arrest, so they do not publish politically sensitive stories. Kwangwari pointed out that the media in Zimbabwe take political stances, so self-censorship exists based on the political sympathies of the media house.

The participants believe strongly that salaries for journalists are too low. According to Jena, there is also a lack of consistency in pay according to duties or title. The participants seemed to agree that private-media journalists are paid better than their counterparts in the public media. However, Magorokosho acknowledged that pay for the state's print journalists has improved, though compensation on the broadcast side is still extremely low.

According to Magorokosho, there are modern and efficient facilities and equipment in the private media. However, she noted that the state media, especially the broadcast media, have few cameras, and those they have are obsolete and poorly maintained, affecting the quality of broadcast material. Gambanga noted that the government lacks the resources to buy new equipment for the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC).

According to the participants, quality niche reporting and programming does not exist in Zimbabwe, particularly in the public media. According to Raath, many reports are long-winded and carelessly written, with no careful analysis or deep understanding of the subject. However, Jena believes there is a bright spot in investigative journalism.

### 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).

## OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

### Zimbabwe Objective Score: 1.03

Despite the ZMC's move to register 15 new media outlets and independent newspapers, the panelists all agreed that the Zimbabwean news media are not objective news sources due to political bias and interference. Most of the indicators scored similarly as bad as the objective score and within half a point. Indicator 3 (state media are non-partisan) scored more than three-quarters of a point lower, however, while indicator 5 (private media produce their own news) scored nearly a full point higher.

As for new media, the *African Media Barometer* reports that there are a number of online newspapers run by Zimbabweans in the diaspora; also, “there are more and more Internet cafés springing up everywhere, and wireless hot spots located at coffee shops and hotels have made the Internet far more accessible. According to the latest figures reported by Internet World Stats, Internet penetration (the percentage of people using the Internet) stands at 10.9 percent.” *African Media Barometer* also said that satellite television delivers popular South African and international channels to those who can afford it, while an SMS news service, Freedom Fone, launched in 2009—prompting swift complaints from the BAZ “to the mobile phone provider Econet that it was allowing one of its customers to ‘broadcast’ without a license.” Econet withdrew its services, and it took a month to sort out the disagreement and reconnect the service.<sup>7</sup>

Yet balanced news sources are still lacking, and Magorokosho emphasized that the country’s repressive media laws and political polarization are behind the failure to provide multiple, objective news sources. She also drew attention to the fact that newspapers are fairly expensive for average Zimbabweans, especially women. At about a dollar a copy, other participants agreed that newspapers are too expensive and that license fees for television and radio are too high as well. And, the Internet is a bastion of the middle-class urban population and out of reach for most rural denizens. According to Rutendo, access to international media is

extremely limited or nonexistent in rural areas due to the lack of electricity as well as the cost.

The panel lamented the lack of free access to international media and the banning of so-called pirate radio stations. Raath expressed disappointment over the confiscation of shortwave radios by policemen. RSF also condemned reports of the confiscations of the radios of rural residents caught listening to programs made by Zimbabwean journalists in exile. According to RSF/IFEX, NGOs distributed the radio sets in rural areas, including Bikita West in Masvingo province, to allow residents to listen to alternative radio programs broadcast from abroad, including Studio 7, Radio VOP (Voice of the People), and Shortwave Radio Africa. According to RSF, “Studio 7 contributed to the distribution of radio sets so that people could listen to something other than the pro-government Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation.” RSF noted that two opposition supporters, Norbert Chinyike and Charles Mhizha, were arrested after radio sets were found in their possession. They were later released without being charged.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, Raath decried the interception of e-mails by the Central Intelligent Officers (CIO) and government control of access to the Internet by an organization called Transnet. According to the *African Media Barometer*, “there is no direct attempt to block or filter Internet content, but there is the constant threat of the Interception and Communications Act 2007, which allows the state to intercept messages deemed to be subversive on e-mail, post, and telephones.” The *African Media Barometer* also reported that “there have been stories of several arrests at Internet cafés when journalists or members of the public are suspected of transmitting information that is supposed to be prejudicial to the state.”<sup>9</sup>

The state or public media continue to dominate Zimbabwe’s media environment and fail to reflect views across the political spectrum. The panelists agreed that state media are woefully partisan and fail the interests of the public at large, remaining a propaganda tool of the ZANU PF party. The MISA Trust Fund Board arrives at a similar conclusion in its 2010 statement on Zimbabwe’s media environment, writing, “We have however witnessed the sanctioned abuse of the national broadcaster by a single political party. The state-owned print media continue their divisive practice of spewing hate speech designed to polarize both the media and the public. Both the national broadcaster and state-owned print media feed from

<sup>7</sup> *African Media Barometer: Zimbabwe 2010*. Ibid, p. 31-32.

#### 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.

<sup>8</sup> “Shortwave radio sets seized in rural areas.” RSF/IFEX: December 3, 2010. Available online at: [http://www.ifex.org/zimbabwe/2010/12/03/shortwave\\_radio/](http://www.ifex.org/zimbabwe/2010/12/03/shortwave_radio/) as of September 2, 2011.

<sup>9</sup> *African Media Barometer: Zimbabwe 2010*. Ibid, p. 20.

taxpapers' money and yet are grossly abused to promote the interests of a select few."<sup>10</sup>

The participants confirmed that international news agencies serve Zimbabwe and are sources for local and international reporters. However, according to Kwangwari, the government actively makes sure that citizens have limited news sources, jamming sources like Voice of America and Voice of the People.

Zimbabwe does not have any registered independent broadcast media. However, Raath noted that nonregistered independent broadcasters like SWRA and Studio 7 produce high-quality programs.

The panel noted that media ownership in Zimbabwe is not very transparent. According to Magorokosho, most Zimbabweans are not aware of the identity of media owners, and the information about media ownership is not easily accessible. Raath noted that the ownership of Zimpapers is supposedly private, but the hidden hand is ZANU-PF. In contrast, he said, the privately owned Alpha Media Holdings published a full list of directors for public benefit.

Regarding journalists' efforts to cover social issues, there are journalists in Zimbabwe addressing issues such as health and gender. MISA-Zimbabwe reported that two Zimbabwean journalists picked up regional awards for their reporting on gender issues in October 2010 at the fourth Gender and Media Summit Awards, convened by Gender Links, Gender and Media Southern Africa (GEMSA), and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) in Johannesburg.

Joyce Jenje Makwenda, a columnist for *The Herald*, won the inaugural award for a new category, Triple T (Tackling Taboo Topics), for addressing taboo issues such as menstruation and women in the shebeen—illegal bar—business. Emmanuel Nkomo, a journalist with the new shortwave radio station Zimbabwe Community Radio (ZICORA), took the prize in the community radio category for his radio talk-show program, *Zvevanhukadzi*, which explores issues surrounding HIV/AIDS.<sup>11</sup>

As for news in minority languages, panelists agreed that such coverage is rare in the mainstream media. Maponga said both the state and private media mainly cover political issues. He noted that National FM, a state radio station, uses local and minority languages, but the content is simply regurgitated ZANU PF propaganda on all radio stations.

<sup>10</sup> "MISA Trust Fund Board (TFB) statement on media developments and challenges in Zimbabwe." Media Institute of Southern Africa, 2010. Available on the MISA website: <http://www.misa.org/mediarelease/archieve%202010/AGM2010.html> as of September 2, 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Malumo, Reagan. "Two Zimbabwean journalists scoop Regional Gender and the media awards." Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA). Available at: <http://www.misa.org/mediarelease/archieve%202010/GEMSAawards.html> as of September 2, 2011.

## OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

### Zimbabwe Objective Score: 1.67

With the highest scores for any objective in this year's Zimbabwe MSI study, Objective 4 (business management) surpassed last year's score of 1.49 but still fell short of moving into the near sustainability category. Most indicators scored fairly close to the objective score, although indicator 7 (audience measurement and circulation figures) lagged behind by two-thirds of a point.

The consensus is that independent media are well-managed businesses and allow a degree of editorial independence. Yet, according to Magorokosho, they are not immune to political polarization, which in a way affects their editorial independence. Last year's MSI panelists also said that the media lack transparency and accountability regarding the use of resources and adherence to business plans.

There are multiple streams of revenue for the private media, including large shares from advertising and donor funding. The Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) funds the public media, along with advertising revenue, but public outlets often suffer losses when government departments fail to pay. Otherwise, the panelists generally agreed that funding for the public media is not very transparent.

Mawere noted that, unlike the public media, the private media do not benefit from government subsidies and often struggle to survive. She pointed to the *Daily News*, one of the papers that was relicensed early in 2010 but cannot publish due to a lack of capital. Community newspapers, Magorokosho said, are in especially bad shape. Inadequate

### 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.

and inconsistent funding sources limit their ability to publish quality material, she said. As a result, some papers are poorly printed, with pictures that appear to have been photocopied.

Previous MSI studies judged that about 67 percent of revenue comes from advertising, but the quality and diversity of advertising quality is poor. The ads are largely unimaginative and restricted to a handful of companies and inserts sponsored by international aid agencies. Internet advertising has some potential but is generally low-quality. Advertising is scarce outside of the major cities and towns.

The government does not subsidize independent media, but MSI panelists are typically split on whether the lack of subsidies is positive or negative, given the difficult economic conditions.

There is little evidence of efforts to improve market research. The media community had little confidence in the impartiality of the few market research surveys that had been conducted. In terms of circulation metrics, the Zimbabwe All Media Products Survey (ZAMPS) periodically produces figures and statistics, but Raath added that ZAMPS statistics are not professionally audited and rely mainly on self-disclosure by companies.

## OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

### Zimbabwe Objective Score: 1.54

Scores for Objective 5 fell about a quarter of a point from last year's study. Indicator scores varied significantly. Indicators 2 (professional associations) and 3 (supporting NGOs) scored nearly a point higher and a point-and-a-half higher, respectively. Indicators 1 (trade associations) and 7 (political

#### 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.

control of media distribution means) scored about a point and three-quarters of a point lower respectively.

The panelists feel that state-media supporting institutions do little to represent the interests of media owners and managers and do not provide members with professional services. However, last year's panelists noted that trade associations that represent community broadcasters are fairly active.

In contrast with the trade associations, there are vibrant professional associations that protect the media, reacting to crimes against journalists and working to advance legal reform to benefit the media, including the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists and the Zimbabwe National Editors Forum. Last year's MSI noted that membership in these associations appears to be fairly stable.

Indicator 3's relatively strong score reflects the panelists' confidence that NGOs support free speech and media independence, despite the external challenges to their efforts. The panelists noted that NGOs including MISA, Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ), FAWMZ, and Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights are all active in Zimbabwe.

In one example of the type of advocacy support NGOs lend to the media, the MISA Trust Fund Board (TFB) issued a statement on media developments and challenges in Zimbabwe, following its 2010 annual meeting in July. Calling upon the government to reform the nation's laws to open up the media and information sector, MISA urged the government to make the reform process as transparent and inclusive as possible and to adhere to international standards set forth in documents including Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, and the Windhoek Declaration. Specifically, MISA asked the government to include the media community in reviewing the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Broadcasting Services Act, Interception of Communications Act (ICA), Public Order and Security Act, and the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act. MISA also articulated objections to hate speech from the state-owned print media and the domination of the national broadcaster by a single political party.<sup>12</sup> However, Mawere underlined the government's failure to respond to calls from these NGOs for greater free speech.

As for media training, there are a number of institutions that offer journalism courses, but quality is poor. Also, most of

<sup>12</sup> "MISA Trust Fund Board (TFB) statement on media developments and challenges in Zimbabwe." Media Institute of Southern Africa, 2010. Available on the MISA website: <http://www.misa.org/mediarelease/archieve%202010/AGM2010.html> as of September 2, 2011.

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these institutions concentrate on theoretical rather than the practical aspects of journalism. Magorokosho said that private colleges offering journalism courses are sprouting up around cities, though lecturers are inexperienced and lack real-world experience. She also noted that the Zimbabwean media space is shrinking; hence, journalism graduates enter a field with few job prospects. According to Mawere, some media NGOs, including MISA, have stepped in to offer short courses. The African Media Barometer: Zimbabwe 2010 reported that MISA is also working to build up a pool of trainers and noted that while many Zimbabwean journalists are not enthusiastic about in-country trainings, ZBC employees must secure permission from the Cabinet of Ministers to attend trainings outside of the country.<sup>13</sup>

As for print, the panelists agreed generally that newsprint and printing facilities are the bastion of government. For instance, newsprint is controlled by Mutare Board and Paper Mills, which the government partially owns.

Media distribution channels, such as transmitters and the Internet, are not privately controlled but regulated by the state through the Post and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ). According to Magorokosho, the Interception of Communications Act and the 2010 mandatory registration of all mobile phone numbers are indicative of the government's obsessive control of public communication. Broadcasting transmitters, for instance, are all controlled by government and are used heavily for political purposes.

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<sup>13</sup> *African Media Barometer: Zimbabwe 2010*. Ibid, p. 67.