

Zimbabwe's political and media space remains restricted in breach of African Union and Southern African Development Community principles on the holding of free and fair elections.



ZIMBABWE

The 2012 panel discussion was held at a time when Zimbabwe's media landscape saw some progress toward openness, with the introduction of two new radio stations. However, implementation of meaningful media reforms by the inclusive government has been slow, and the existence of laws that infringe on freedom of expression and access to information has meant that Zimbabwe's media continue to operate in a restrictive environment.

The Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe's licensing of two new players has broken the monopoly in radio broadcasting that the national broadcaster, Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC), has held for many years. Star, a subsidiary of the state-owned Zimbabwe Newspapers Group, went on air officially on June 25, 2012, while ZiFM Stereo, a privately owned radio station owned by AB Communications, went live on August 15, 2012. The stations provide additional access to information outside the capital. Meanwhile, the ZBC continues to dominate television.

In 2012, the government established a Media Council under the Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC) to create an ethical code, governed by the contradictorily named Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), and to codify punishments for breaches of AIPPA. At the time of writing, the code had not yet been written but was anticipated to introduce new restrictions on the media in advance of upcoming elections.

AIPPA itself includes restrictive registration and licensing procedures for journalists and media outlets and contains sections that the African Commission on Human Rights and local activists describe as unconstitutional. The law would criminalize certain aspects of journalists' work through vague prohibitions such as "abusing journalistic privileges," "broadcasting recklessly," or attempting to report on a government function without a license. Operating without a ZMC license can lead to fines or closure.

The state-owned daily newspapers' and state television station's coverage continues to be partisan, and space given to alternative political parties remains minimal. Where parties other than the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) are covered, the coverage is usually negative. Like all other newspapers, the state-owned Zimpapers' products are confined to the country's main towns and cities, while their \$1 cost is still out of reach for many.

The coalition government partners are preparing for a constitutional referendum and election, while the reforms stated under the Global Political Agreement, which helped establish a governmental power-sharing arrangement in 2009, have barely been implemented. Zimbabwe's political and media space remains restricted in breach of African Union and Southern African Development Community principles on the holding of free and fair elections.

ZIMBABWE AT A GLANCE

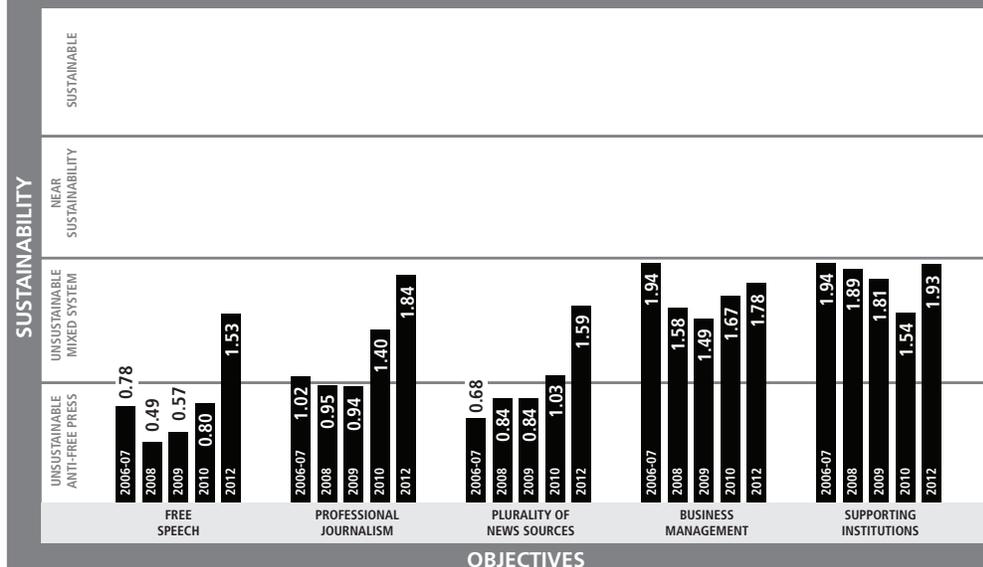
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 12,619,600 (July 2012 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 (2011-Atlas):** \$8.110 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2012)
- > **GNI per capita (2011-Atlas):** \$640 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2012)
- > **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: 1.53

The overall average score for Objective 1, a significant improvement from the 2010 MSI study, shows that there has been some improvement in Zimbabwe's media environment. However, the country's laws, which infringe on free speech and access to information, remain a concern. As much as there has been some movement in terms of implementing certain clauses under the Global Political Agreement that are meant to address media reforms, these have been insignificant, as the laws that affect free speech and access to information remain unchanged. Furthermore, the government's will to implement meaningful reforms that address these issues is minimal.

Zimbabwe's laws are supposed to comply with regional laws; for example, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights has recommended that some sections of AIPPA be struck down because they hinder freedom of information and the media, but this has been ignored by the government. The consensus among all participants was that laws that infringe on the right to free speech are still intact despite the inclusive government's obligation to address media reforms more than four years later. AIPPA, the Public Order and Security Act, the Interception of Communications Act, the Criminal Law Codification and Reform Act, and the Broadcasting Services Act continue to be used to stifle free speech.

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.

Notably, there have been efforts at addressing media reforms through the proposal of a Press Freedom and Transparency Bill by the chairperson of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Media and Information, Settlement Chikwinya, but this falls short of media practitioners' concerns because it combines issues of freedom of expression and media regulation, which should be separated if media reforms are to be meaningful.

Rutendo Mawere, a freelance journalist based in Gweru, Loughty Dube from the Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe, and Patience Zirima, who coordinates the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe, commented that Section 20 of Zimbabwe's current constitution states that everyone has the right to enjoy freedom of expression without expressly providing for media or press freedom. Dube also said that the Criminal Law Codification and Reform Act stifles free speech. Christopher Mhike, a media lawyer and commissioner with the ZMC, stated, "We should look at the issue of the media from a social dimension. We do not have a culture of freedom or a system that entrenches freedom of expression. The law gives with one hand and takes away with the other."

Zirima noted that the existence of the ZMC is only entrenching laws like AIPPA, which regulates this body, a situation she described as "undemocratic." The only effort at addressing the issue of these laws was in the form of a motion in parliament in June 2012 by Parliamentary Portfolio Committee Chairperson Chikwinya to have amendments made to AIPPA after consultations with various media stakeholders. The panel, however, noted that there had not been any legislative reforms to repeal or amend repressive laws. Nyasha Nyakunu, research and information officer at the Zimbabwe chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA-Zimbabwe), commented that the government has actively denied efforts to establish a Freedom of Information Bill.

Issues of licensing and registration must be looked at separately, according to ZMC Commissioner Chris Mhike. He stated that the law stipulates that an application is to be dealt with within 30 days, and broadly there has been an effort to observe this, judging from the number of media houses licensed by the ZMC. He noted that the broadcast licensing system is unsatisfactory because there are no alternative broadcasters where television is concerned, but certain aspects on licensing and registration have been met with respect to the print media.

The Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe compromises transparency: when open interviews for those wishing to attain broadcasting licenses are held, the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe refuses to divulge information about the interviews. Despite the government's talks of opening up the airwaves, Zimbabwe still has one state-owned public broadcaster and no alternative broadcaster; thus, there is no diversity in the broadcasting sector. In addition, there have

been concerns over the issuing of broadcasting licenses to Zimpapers and AB Communications, as these are allegedly aligned to ZANU-PF. Patricia Magorokosho, a program officer with the Federation of African Media Women Zimbabwe, stated that she had reservations about broadcast licensing due to the fact that no community broadcasters have been issued with licenses, but there have been developments since new players in the sector were licensed.

Application for registration, although not overtly political, requires the applicant to provide the ZMC with the names of the company's shareholders and directors, a five-year business plan, the names of its journalists, the type of news service it will provide, and the source of its capital investment, among other bureaucratic requirements, none of which are required in establishing an ordinary business. Basic business registration is completed at the Companies' Registry Office. The ZMC, the successor to the old, notorious Media and Information Commission, which closed down at least four newspapers under AIPPA, operates under precisely the same laws. However, the ZMC has allowed more players onto the market since the formation of the coalition government. Mhike stated that there have been arguments as to whether there should be registration by a body like the ZMC but made the point that the old system (before AIPPA was promulgated in 2002), in which news organizations registered their products under the Post Office, worked well and that there was no need to complicate the process further through the establishment of a commission.

All the participants agreed that the tax structure is not viable for the media industry and that money remitted to it has not contributed to a sustainable media sector. Mhike pointed out that there has been an outcry over the registration fees that are being charged by the ZMC and that this has been restrictive for new players. For example, he stated that apart from the application fee for registering a company, there is another separate registration fee; media houses must pay for accrediting journalists and are also required to pay a levy that is charged under AIPPA, all of which will result in high costs. The application fee for mass media houses is \$500, while the registration fee is \$2,000 and the renewal fee is \$1,500. News agencies pay \$300 in application fees, registration is \$1,500, and renewal costs \$1,500.

Journalists still endure frequent prosecution, harassment, and assault. However, few journalists and media houses are prosecuted under AIPPA, and there has been only one successful conviction during the year under that law. In all other cases, the charges have been dropped or the journalists have been acquitted. For example, Thomas Madhuku was freed on \$50 bail after being arrested on July 23, 2012. He was accused of contravening AIPPA. Madhuku was arrested at the Registrar-General's Offices in Harare while trying to seek clarification from its chief, Tobaiwa Mudede, on anomalies he had identified in voter registration records. Madhuku was

freed by a judge after the state failed to furnish the court with a trial date.

An example of a threat to journalists was made by Information and Publicity Minister Webster Shamu, who threatened private newspapers with closure if they continued to report negatively on the president. Another example panelists gave was the disruption of public hearings on the Human Rights Commission Bill at Parliament Building on July 23, 2011, where private-media journalists were attacked by a mob of ZANU-PF youths. This is one among many incidents of journalists' harassment that have occurred over the past year.

There have also been incidents where persons have been arrested for free expression on social media platforms, such as Facebook, and private newspapers have been torn and banned in some areas around the country, with the latter being highlighted as a crime against the work of journalists.

Zimbabwe's longstanding "insult laws" continue to be the ones most often used to intimidate journalists and suppress their reporting. Laws such as the Criminal Law Codification and Reform Act, for example, protect the police, military, and the presidency against material that "undermines" them. Other high-ranking officials have used libel laws to persecute journalists. For example, *Daily News* editor Stanley Gama and reporter Xolisani Ncube were charged with criminal defamation following a story published in the paper that contained allegations that Local Government Minister Ignatius Chombo had bragged about his wealth to a delegation from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Access to information continues to be difficult, with responses to official requests requiring a cumbersome written process and a 30-day reply period. If there is no response within the 30 days, the requester can lodge a complaint with the relevant minister. But there is still no guarantee of obtaining access to the information sought. The complaint process is a laborious and pointless exercise for anybody, let alone journalists working on a deadline.

The Internet continues to be available, and there is unrestricted access to its use. Zimbabwe's laws do not restrict anyone from setting up his or her own website or starting a blog. However, the Interception of Communications Act mandates that all Internet service providers install surveillance equipment and states that "authorized persons," such as the chief of intelligence, the head of the president's national security department, the national police commissioner, or anyone so nominated, may obtain a warrant from the communications minister—not a court—to intercept or monitor telecommunications, posts, or any other related communications service. Whether this permission is ever formally sought is unknown, but it is widely known that selective e-mails are subject to surveillance and that the intelligence services routinely tap telephones, both landlines and mobiles.

Although it is no longer illegal for a person to act as a journalist without being accredited at the ZMC, unaccredited reporters are denied access to official functions and information and can be prosecuted for attempting to obtain such information. Official accreditation at the ZMC is usually a fairly basic exercise, if bureaucratic, and requires an accreditation fee. However, journalists applying for accreditation must state which news organization they are working for. This also applies to freelancers. For foreign journalists applying for a license, strict time constraints are applied to those who are successful. Until the establishment of the new ZMC, following the formation of the coalition government, existing laws were used to deny many foreign journalists from entering, or working from, the country.

Mawere scored the professional entry process particularly negatively, stating, "Despite receiving accreditation, journalists still have to apply for special registration for events such as the ZANU-PF congress." Valentine Maponga, program manager of Zimbabwe Peace Project, added, "There are a number of people practicing journalism without having been trained. Our laws, however, require a practicing journalist to be accredited for as long as they are working for registered media outlets, which results in a specific provision of excluding journalists who are not accredited."

Barriers to entering the profession and practicing as a journalist come from within, as well: Zirima commented that female journalists are subject to harassment in the newsroom.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Zimbabwe Objective Score: 1.84

The average score for this objective was 1.84, which shows that the professional standards of quality journalism in Zimbabwe have improved slightly but continue to be an issue that needs to be addressed.

The panelists agreed that professional standards were low, citing several reasons. Most journalists rely on the same sources for information, a practice that has resulted in biased news sources and sensational articles in some instances. As Maponga described the situation, "Fair reporting has become rare because of the polarization that exists in Zimbabwe's media environment." Many stories rely on one source, with little effort by the journalist to find alternative views. Maponga described the news currently being produced as "half-baked" as a result. Mawere attributed the lack of proper sourcing to a lack of resources, where travel is limited by budgets. Nunurai Jena, a freelance journalist, stated simply, "People are not doing their jobs."

Mhike noted that he has watched some reports where the same source is used several times. For example, Tsholotsho

party MP Jonathan Moyo is described as a "political analyst" in one story, a ZANU-PF Politburo member in another, and simply as a member of parliament in another story in the same bulletin. He agreed, "There are too many of the same people relied on for information even in the business and sports reports on television. The same can also be said of the print media." Magorokosho disagreed in part, arguing that business news stories are well-sourced.

According to Mawere, while journalists have tried to report objectively, the polarization that exists makes it difficult to achieve objectivity in reporting. She stated that there are government officials and departments that refuse to give comments to journalists from the private media, and failure to access information has resulted in shallow news stories being produced as a result. Foster Dongozi, secretary general of the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ), held the opinion that the proliferation of new players in the media industry has generated competition and professionalism.

The panelists discussed the issue of bribes, noting that journalists find it difficult to distinguish among a gift, an incentive, and a bribe. Some pointed out journalists simply do not cover an event if there are no incentives.

Jena stated that a lack of resources contributes to poor reporting standards. Nyakunu gave the example of the ZBC, which is struggling to replace old and antiquated equipment and could still be a long way from moving from analog to digital broadcasting, a situation that affects the quality of programming. Magorokosho, however, stated that the advent of digital media is beginning to change and transform the process of gathering and disseminating information. However, she gave an example of the ZBC's collaboration with Iran, noting that Iran had supplied some digital equipment to the organization but that there are no skilled staff to operate it.

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).

With respect to digital media, Magorokosho gave examples of newsrooms that have taken the initiative to train some of their journalists on new media. The Federation of Africa Media Women Zimbabwe trained 15 women in new media; as a result, Zimpapers commissioned Phyllis Kachere to undergo further training so that she could, in turn, teach others. All this was done in an effort to improve information gathering and dissemination at media houses.

Loughty noted that newspaper executives drive better vehicles than their reporting teams can access, demonstrating the executives' priorities of themselves over their work.

The panelists described the journalists' professional code of conduct under the Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe as significant in ensuring that journalists maintain a certain quality in their reporting and raised the point that if reporting standards were poor in Zimbabwe, the Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe would be overwhelmed with complaints, which is currently not the case. Zirima stated that corrupt tendencies should be avoided and that ethical standards should be maintained at all times. Nyakunu stated that journalists allegedly receive bribes to augment their poor salaries, which are said to be exploitative, compared with the perks and salaries enjoyed by the executives who run the media organizations.

On the whole, the panelists agreed that reporting in Zimbabwean media is unethical despite newsrooms having reporting charters and codes of conduct, leading to poor standards in some instances. Magorokosho gave an example of *H-Metro* newspaper, where child victims of sexual abuse have their faces splashed on the front pages of the paper; she also pointed out the tabloid's gender-insensitive reporting and referenced the example of a nine-year-old who was referred to as a prostitute in one *H-Metro* article.

All participants agreed that journalists are forced into self-censorship out of fear of persecution, fear of politicians, fear of losing advertisers, and fear of job loss. Overall, panelists felt that the main reason that journalists in Zimbabwe practice self-censorship is because of the state's hostility toward journalists. Maponga noted that journalists have a constant fear of intimidation and arrest, so they do not publish what they deem to be politically sensitive stories.

Likewise, key events go uncovered either because journalists fear to cover them or are prevented. Security issues are one of these, even when they are superficial. For example, Mawere recalled, "As a journalist, I have failed to cover military parades at the army barracks in the Midlands Province, as even a press accreditation card does not entitle one to cover such events."

The panel's consensus on salaries was that they are low. Maponga stated that most journalists are moving away from the profession, as is evidenced by the professional shifts of

many to civil society. Junior reporters are paid not more than \$500, senior reporters about \$700, and news editors and senior news management personnel between \$1,500 and \$3,000. It was noted that journalists across the divide receive meager travel allowances for their assignments.

Citizens appear to prefer entertainment to news, but the panel did not cite a coverage preference of entertainment over news. Magorokosho noted that broader Internet access and adoption mean that people can access news whenever they wish on their mobile phones. There was agreement that the new radio stations have tried to maintain a balance in terms of provision of information and entertainment.

As a whole, the media cover a wide variety of events and issues, including democracy and governance, health, entertainment, culture, sports, and business. Investigative reporting has been lacking due to the great resources in time, skills, and money it requires. Niche reporting has improved across the board, with some journalists focusing on specific fields.

Dube stated that investigative reporting in Zimbabwe is close to non-existent, as journalists tend to focus on other matters that are deemed "relevant," most notably politics. Furthermore, those from the public (ZBC) and state-owned media cover mostly state functions, especially in provinces outside of Harare.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Zimbabwe Objective Score: 1.59

The panelists agreed that a plurality of news sources can be found only in the print media, where there is some diversity for readers. Broadcast remains a problem, however. The ZBC continues to dominate the broadcasting sector, operating two television stations and four radio stations; there are only two independent radio stations and no community broadcasters. As a result, broadcast news tends to repeat and reformulate the same news content across all the stations. The panelists noted that there have been developments in diversifying access to information through the Internet via mobile telephones, although low bandwidth affects access to the service.

Magorokosho stated that Zimbabweans rely increasingly on Facebook for news. However, she pointed out that citizens in the rural communities do not have much of a choice in terms of available sources of information. Mobile phones, for example, are used mostly for communication and not as tools for which information can be accessed via the Internet.

Mhike described the situation at the ZBC and Zimpapers as "undesirable," given that they are public media but their reports do not reflect diversity of opinions. The panelists

agreed that the public media are biased toward ZANU-PF and that any party deemed as the opposition is portrayed negatively. Dongozi stated, "The use of 'traditional, reliable, and friendly' sources or experts has created professional commentators, and this has resulted in a limited number of opinions." Nyakunu observed, "Political biases and preferences are still discernible in news coverage by both private and public media but are much more evident where they concern the state-controlled ZBC. Of concern is the amount of hate language and hostility generated in some of the opinion pieces by columnists, especially those writing for the public media."

According to Zirima, citizens' access to media is restricted by law. She cited an example of the short-wave radio stations that broadcast from outside the country, which have been labeled as "pirate radio stations," even though these are alternative sources of information—especially for those in remote areas who do not receive any other kind of transmission.

The Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe (MMPZ) observes that there is no direct attempt by the government to block or filter Internet content, but as noted above, the law allows the executive branch to intercept communications without a court order. Recently, there have been two prosecutions under the Criminal Code of people making comments on Facebook, one of which was successful. In the past year, the government has threatened to ban the import of some foreign newspapers, such as the *South African Sunday Times*. At the December ZANU-PF conference, delegates appealed to the government to acquire equipment to jam the broadcasts of short-wave radio stations broadcasting into the country.

Magorokosho stated that most media houses are located around towns and cities where their markets are concentrated; therefore, access to information in those areas is bound to be higher than in rural areas. The panelists noted that the rural population's income levels at times constrain access to information, as citizens in these places are relatively poor and the cost of newspapers is prohibitive.

Dube commented that with the closure of Zimbabwe Information Services and NewZiana struggling financially, Zimbabwe does not have local news agencies, which has affected citizens' access to domestic news. However, the country has various international news agencies, such as Reuters, AP, and AFP, and the domestic media use copy from these agencies. Nyakunu, however, noted that Zimbabwe's media tend to use copy from these news agencies mainly for foreign news rather than for locally generated content. It was noted that the ZBC relies on Russia Today for international news.

Dongozi stated that although the private media generate their own news, the trend in Zimbabwe has shown that some of their reports are the same as the ones that are published in the public media. In some instances, the headlines from both read the same. Magorokosho argued that despite private and public media's running the same story, the different reports present alternative views.

The panelists noted that media ownership in Zimbabwe is not very transparent and that there is speculation surrounding the ownership of some media outlets. For example, the Mass Media Trust should be setting the policy at Zimpapers, since it is the majority shareholder. But, in reality, ZANU-PF appears to have control over Zimpapers, judging by its biased coverage and editorial policy.

The panelists agreed that inclusion of minority languages in the mainstream media is very rare. Maponga noted that both the state and private media mainly cover political issues. Further, he said, "The state-run National FM station tries to use local and minority languages, but the content is translated political propaganda from ZANU-PF that is on all radio stations." Religious groups that are aligned to political power receive coverage in the media, particularly those from the Apostolic Faith sect, and even where traditional chiefs are covered, it is with regard to their affiliation with political power rather than the concerns of their communities.

Social issues are discussed mostly in the context of court reports and issues of infidelity, particularly in tabloids such as *H-Metro* and *B-Metro*. Gender issues are downplayed because media outlets do not have gender policies. Only in February 2012 did Zimpapers announce that it was going to introduce a gender policy in a bid to address gender disparities and improve news content.

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.

Nyakunu stated that news is confined to Harare due to minimal investment on coverage from areas outside of the capital, which has affected the type of news produced. Magorokosho attributed her high score to the fact that community media—for example, *Chaminuka News*, based in Marondera—produce news that is from the community. The panelists agreed that coverage of international news exists, broadly speaking.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Zimbabwe Objective Score: 1.78

The panelists agreed generally that media are moderately well-managed businesses. Nyasha said that mainstream public and private media have been in existence for years, which, according to him, means they are well-managed. However, he pointed out that high operating costs saw the closure of *The Mail* and that privately owned community newspapers, such as *Gweru Times* and the now-defunct *Sandawana News*, based in the Midlands Province, face serious financial problems. They also suffer from a lack of journalism skills and technical support. The panelists agreed that editorial independence was compromised, particularly in the public media, due to political interference.

Dongozi, Nyakunu, and Dube said that advertising revenue brings in about 60 percent of the industry's earnings; the 2010 MSI study judged that about 67 percent of revenue came from advertising. As a result, newspapers at times give more space to advertisers, as this is where their money comes from. Loughty went on to state that media can be manipulated by advertisers because they require money and may avoid

important issues to accommodate their advertisers. Mawere highlighted that most media outlets are struggling due to the economic conditions prevailing in the country. Most media outlets lack advertising on online platforms, and small media houses, particularly community newspapers, are struggling to embrace going online. Magorokosho pointed out that sustainability is a challenge due to expenses and that there is limited and inadequate funding to the media industry.

The panelists also expressed their reservations with regard to the reliability of circulation figures and audience statistics produced by the Zimbabwe All Media Products Survey (ZAMPS), given that Alpha Media Holdings pulled out of the survey after questioning its results. ZAMPS 2012 tallied *The Herald's* daily readership at 1,820,018, trailed by the *Daily News* at 986,167, and followed by *Newsday*. Analyst Jealous Mawarire said these statistics constituted “a deliberate attempt to manipulate statistics and readers' minds in an environment where competition for the market has been getting tougher on a daily basis.” Only ZAMPS conducts this research, and little is done in the way of Internet readership statistics. Magorokosho said, “There is both ignorance and secrecy surrounding the methodology of market-research statistics in the country.”

MMPZ observed that while newspapers subject themselves to the Audit Bureau of Circulation, which provides accurate figures for newspaper circulation, these statistics remain largely confidential, except to corporate advertising agencies. Since this international organization withdrew from the country several years ago, there have been no reliable figures for print runs or circulation.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Zimbabwe Objective Score: 1.93

Trade associations, while they exist, are weak and passive when compared with journalists' associations. Nyakunu noted that trade associations representing community broadcasters have been lobbying to open the airwaves to their members again. There is no organization representing newspaper publishers.

There are professional associations that protect the sector and journalists against crimes and legal restrictions, including the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists, which draws members from across the country, and the Zimbabwe National Editors Forum.

Zimbabwe's NGOs support free speech and independent media, despite the external challenges they face when carrying out their work. The panelists listed a host of NGOs: the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), MMPZ, the

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.

Federation of African Women in Media Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists, the Zimbabwe National Editors' Forum, and the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights. Several are national and based in the capital, while MISA and MMPZ have community structures established in the rural areas that assist them in their lobbying and advocacy initiatives. NGOs have provided training on the premises of media outlets as well.

Media organizations, associations, and NGOs formed the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe to act as an umbrella organization, which includes all the aforementioned groups as well as the Africa Community Publishing Development Trust. The Alliance's Access to Information Campaign is an example of one of the initiatives that has coordinated the efforts of journalists to call for unrestricted access to information for citizens as well as journalists. The Alliance also advocates for media law reforms.

Institutions that offer journalism courses exist, but the quality of the programs is low and focuses on theory over practice. Midlands State University offers a degree in media studies. The National University of Science and Technology offers one in journalism and communication studies. The University of Zimbabwe, Harare Polytechnic, and Christian College of Southern Africa (CCOSA) all offer diplomas in journalism. Harare Polytechnic and CCOSA offer more practical training, including modules on how to operate studio equipment, and the universities have begun to adopt this in their curricula. One panelist noted that, in some instances, editors have to re-train student interns; this takes up a lot of time, considering that these people have come to the job with university-level training. Nyasha pointed out that training institutions lack the requisite facilities and resources, which impacts negatively on the quality of media professionals they

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.

produce. Journalism students also must rely on Internet cafés for their research, which is expensive, and most institutions do not have their own computer laboratories.

Rutendo pointed out that the government monopolizes control of the channels of media distribution, such as broadcast transmitters, and has refused to grant licenses to private players, like Radio VOP, which broadcasts from Madagascar and has field offices in Zimbabwe and South Africa, depriving citizens of alternative sources of information.

Zimbabwe has not been able to create strong ICT infrastructure that meets the needs of the media and citizens. Zimbabwe experiences slow Internet connectivity, which has affected citizens' media needs. The issue of constant power cuts also has a bearing on Internet access and usage.

List of Panel Participants

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