![SMEC - Sudan Media and Elections Consortium]

MEDIA AND ELECTIONS IN SUDAN

MONITORING THE COVERAGE OF SUDAN 2010 ELECTIONS

INTERIM REPORT No. 2

Period 13 February – 7 March 2010

Issued on 16 March 2010

I. Executive Summary

The coverage of the election campaign was extensive and regular over the period observed. The media provided large amounts of information on the main contestants, parties and issues using a variety of formats and programmes.

The races for the National Presidency, the National Assembly and the GoSS Presidency dominated TV reporting. Radio coverage reflected the geographical locations of channels and their corresponding journalistic priorities: stations broadcasting from the North tended to focus on candidates for the National Assembly and the National Presidency. Radios broadcasting from the South devoted the largest part of their airtime to the race for Goss National Assembly and Presidency. Presidential elections – both for the National and GoSS Presidency – dominated press coverage too. President Al Bashir and President Salva Kiir were the most covered candidates for their respective elections in all media.

The two main parties – the NCP and the SPLM – enjoyed of the highest coverage respectively in the North and South audiovisual media: TV and radio stations in the North tended to give the NCP and its members the largest coverage; similarly the media targeting the South generally gave the SPLM the broadest visibility. In both geographical areas, other political parties received very limited attention compared to the two main ruling parties. The press reflected a similar polarisation between the two leading parties and a clear concentration of the coverage on them. As a matter of fact, most of the monitored media outlets provided either the NCP or the SPLM with the largest amount of print space, while the other contesting parties generally received reduced coverage.

The tone of the coverage was generally either neutral or positive while negative reporting was very sporadic. The NCP and the SPLM were the main targets for non neutral reporting in all observed media.

Large part of election related news covered the launching of the main contestants campaigns for both the Presidential race as well as the State Governors. There were reciprocal accusations of fraud and misbehaviour including supporters' harassment and misuse of state resources. Election news was also focused on a call by the opposition parties for the cancellation of the media mechanism established by NEC to regulate coverage of electoral campaigns and ensure equal airtime for candidates, and the formation of a new media council that includes all political parties. Threats to boycott the elections and issues regarding postponement of the elections were also at the forefront of election related news.

Quantitative data regarding the coverage of politicians and candidates showed that women received very limited coverage in all the media monitored. Within audiovisual media women politicians received an average of 5% of the total editorial time[1] for television and 6% for radio. Most of the women represented on TV and radio were either party members or activists, while limited coverage was provided to women covering leading positions in the Executive Bodies – such as in the National and Goss Government - or at parties' level. Women's visibility in the press was clearly related to prominent roles and positions in the political sphere, such as the National and GoSS Governments and party leadership.

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[1] This category includes any kind of coverage under the direct editorial responsibility of the media outlet: news articles, editorial, analysis and opinions, interviews, photos, cartoons as well as polls. It does not include: paid political and election advertisement, free airtime established by the NEC mechanism, mails from readers.

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The media informed on technical and operational aspects of the election process in a regular manner. Election bodies - namely the National Election Commission (NEC) and the States' High Committees for Elections (HCE) – and their activities received constant coverage. News mainly focused on the achievements and targets reached by state administration for elections as well as on problems that may undermine a fair voting process. These included allegations of partiality and bias of the NEC advanced by some parties and rumours and discussions regarding the possibility to postpone elections. Institutional information on how to vote and the number of ballot papers was limited to political programs and advertising both in print and audiovisual media. However, some radio stations provided on the spot information in a variety of formats including music programmes, dramas and talk shows. Special targets of voter education were women and their right to vote. A key message of voter education campaign was related to the importance of peaceful and fair elections.

The number of explicit episodes of hate speech observed for this reporting period appeared relatively low and limited in scope both in terms of message and target groups. Most of the cases monitored were related to a vehement style of campaigning and confrontation between the main contestants rather than on targeted calls to violence and discrimination. The most recursive type of inflammatory language concerned episodes of defamation among candidates. More serious cases – such as call for violence or calls for conflict escalation – were very limited. Furthermore, when present, this kind of hate speech mainly involved topics regarding elections and contestants and they did not touch upon broader issues and target groups.

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II. Foreword

The Sudan Media and Elections Consortium (SMEC) was established to implement a Media and Election project in Sudan. One main activity of the SMEC is media monitoring of election coverage.

The media monitoring takes place all over Sudan, with two main joint media monitoring units, one in Khartoum and one in Juba, and parallel media monitoring units in seven states. Media Monitoring Units commenced their activities on 13 February at the opening of the campaign; the observation will continue till the end of May to assess post election coverage. The SMEC carries out media monitoring of four TV stations, seventeen radio channels and thirteen newspapers on a daily basis[2]. All selected media are monitored according to a methodological approach created in 1995 and based on content analysis. It was tested and adopted in a number of elections by international organisations and civic society groups all over the world, including Algeria, Morocco, Bahrain Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, Tunisia, Yemen, Kenya, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Uganda, Zambia, Congo, Togo, Sierra Leone and Madagascar.

This is the second interim report on media monitoring activities. Bi-weekly reports will be made public in the course of the election period with an interim report directly after the elections and a final report in June.

The monitoring of election and political coverage is based on both quantitative and qualitative analysis and it aims at observing and assessing the extent to which media provide fair and balanced coverage of politicians and other stakeholders. The project also monitors hate speech or inflammatory language to assess whether the media acted as agents of pacification or rather contributed to increase any potential tensions related to elections.

III. Media Monitoring of Election Coverage: preliminary findings[3]

The coverage of the election campaign has been extensive and regular over the period observed (13 February – 7 March 2010). The media provided large amounts of information on the main contestants and parties using a variety of formats and programmes.

The two main parties – the NCP and the SPLM – enjoyed the highest coverage respectively in the North and South: the media in the North tended to give the NCP and its members the largest coverage; similarly the media targeting the South generally gave the SPLM the broadest visibility. In both geographical areas, other political parties received very limited attention compared to the two main ruling parties. Moreover, the incumbent parties sometimes exploited official events - such as institutional meetings and ceremonies - for campaign purposes, thus increasing their advantage in terms of visibility and public reach.

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[2] Press: Al Sahfa, Al Ray Al Aam, Al Intibaha, Al Sudani, Akhir Lahza, Ajras Al huriah, Akhbar Alyoum, Al Ayam, The Citizen, Juba Post, Khartoum Monitor, Southern Eye and Sudan Vision
TV: Sudan TV, Blue Nile, Khartoum State TV and South Sudan TV
Radio stations; Omdurman Radio, Khartoum State Radio , Peace Service, Al Qwat Al Mussalaha, Saheroon, North Kurdufan, North Darfur, Red Sea, South Sudan Radio, Radio Miraya, Radio Bakhita, Liberty FM, Junubna FM, Rumbek FM, 97.5 FM/Voice of Eastern Equatoria, South Sudan Radio Malakal, Spirit FM
[3] The data for Media Monitoring of Election coverage refer to the period 13 February – 5 March 2010.

Large part of election related news covered the launching of the main contestants campaign as well as on the reciprocal accusations of frauds and misbehaviours including supporters' harassment and misuse of state resources. Election news also focused also on the withdrawal of the opposition parties from the schedule for free airtime as established by the NEC and their threat to boycott the elections. Other events characterising the agenda for the period observed were related to the launch of President Bashir's campaigns in the states of South and West Sudan, the political reactions to the Doha Framework Agreement, and the International Women's Day.

Some media outlets displayed little accuracy and impartiality in portraying the launching of the campaign of smaller parties that sometimes were compared – not in a favourable light – to the ruling party. Furthermore, a number of episodes of partisan coverage were observed in the print media where journalists expressed personal opinions and positions in news articles.

Polls and surveys concerning the potential outcome of the elections were published in the press, and they focused only on the main contestants for Presidential Elections, both National and GoSS[4].

III-A Radio and Television: coverage of the election campaign[5]

During the period observed both television and radio channels ensured extensive coverage of politics and elections. A number of different formats and programmes were available to the public with news bulletins and talk shows being the main channels to convey information about the campaign and political life.

The NCP and its representatives obtained the largest part of their editorial coverage on television - an average of 54% of the overall time - followed by SPLM with 28%. In addition, most TV channels based in the North devoted the highest amount of airtime (75% of the overall airtime) to the NCP; on the contrary, stations based in the South allotted nearly all their coverage to the SPLM (some 90% of the overall airtime). This datum shows an evident advantage for the two main parties, a clear concentration and polarisation of the coverage among the two main political parties, a concomitant limited attention for smaller parties and a distribution of time based on geographical target audiences of the channels.

This trend is mirrored in radio coverage too where the NCP got a 49% of the overall editorial coverage and SPLM a 21%. Similar to the trend observed for television, radio stations broadcasting from the North – with some exceptions – tended to devote the largest time to the NCP, channels broadcasting from the South allotted to the SPLM the highest portion of their airtime, while other parties received very limited coverage during the period monitored in both geographical areas.

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[4] These include: Omar al-Bashir, Yasser Arman, Sadiq al-Mahdi for National Presidency and Salva Kiir and Lam Akol for GoSS Presidency.

[5] Data do not include radios monitored at State level.

Table 1 Allocation of time among political actors on TV – aggregation by party

PARTY	Time
NCP	54%
SPLM	28%
PCP	4%
Independent	4%
Others[7]	4%
UNP	2%
SAP	2%
DUP	1%
SPLM-DC	1%
SCP	1%
DUPO	1%
Total	100%
Total in absolute values – minutes	*2480*

Table 2 Allocation of time among political actors on Radio – aggregation by party

PARTY	Time
NCP	49%
SPLM	21%
Others[6]	8%
UNP	3%
PCP	3%
URRP	2%
SAP	2%
Independent	2%
DUP	2%
SCP	1%
SSDP	1%
SPLM-DC	1%
DUPO	1%
NNDP	1%
UP-C	1%
SANU	1%
SSDF	1%
Total	100%
Total in absolute values – minutes	*3216*

The tone of the coverage was generally either neutral or positive while negative reporting was very sporadic. The NCP usually enjoyed the highest positive visibility thus confirming the trend already observed in relation to its coverage. The tendency to cover the two main parties in a positive way was also observed for radio channels.

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[6] This category includes all parties that received less than 1% coverage: MSOP, SFNP, NRenP, JNA, Other, MBO, NIF, EPJD, NJP, NDUF, NPAP, UDUP, USNP, PSJP, SNFGUP, NLP, SNLP, USAP, MSUP, UDSF, UDF, RCP, UFP, BC, FWP, NDA, UPRD, WBP, BCP, ANCP, PFDR, NUDP, NUP, SConP, NDFP, SUNP, NSP, SDPCES, ADP, SA, MP, SUFP, SBP, LDP, NRP, WANUP, NASP, EDP, SLFOP, SFLP, UDP, USDF

[7] This category includes all parties that received less than 1% coverage: SNFGUP, NNDP, MBO, UP-C, SSDF, SSDP, BCP, UPRD, RCP, URRP, BC, EPJD, UFP, NDA, USDF, NJP, NSP, SBP, HDP, PSJP, LDP, UDF

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Chart 1 Tone of the coverage for political actors on TV – aggregation by party

Values expressed in seconds
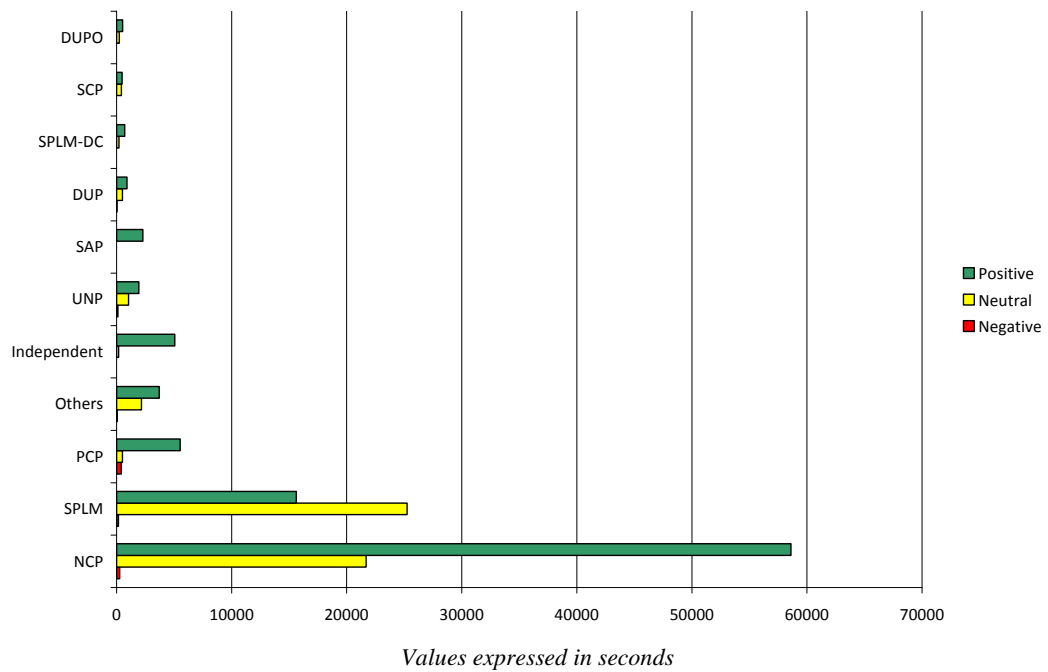
Chart 2 Tone of the coverage for political actors on Radio - aggregation by party
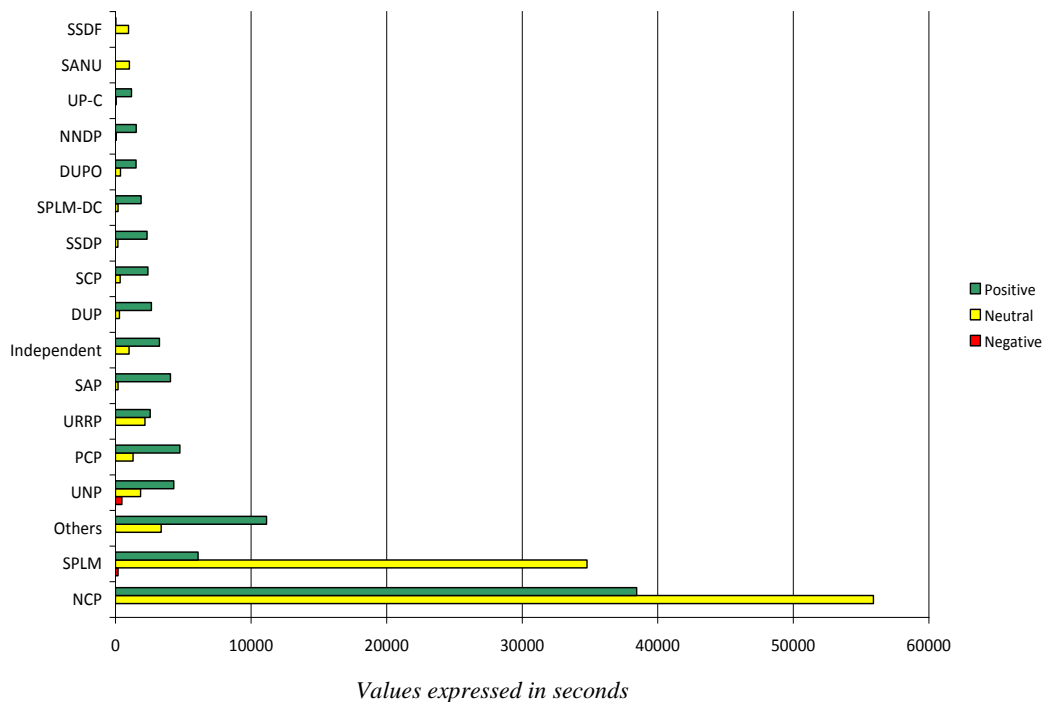
Values expressed in seconds

The races for the National Presidency, the National Assembly and the GoSS Presidency dominated TV reporting with a total of 82% of the overall coverage devoted to candidates of those elections (respectively 37%, 31% and 14%). President Al Bashir and President Salva Kiir were the candidates with the largest coverage among the contestants respectively for the National and the GoSS Presidencies.

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Radio coverage reflected the geographical locations of channels and their corresponding journalistic priorities: stations broadcasting from the North tended to focus on candidates for the National Assembly (31% of the overall airtime) and National Presidency (29%). Radios broadcasting from the South devoted the largest part of their airtime to the race for the Goss National Assembly and Presidency (respectively 36% and 33% of the airtime) while National Presidency received 17%. President Al Bashir and President Salva Kiir were the most covered candidates on radio channels as well.

III-B The Press: coverage of the election campaign

The coverage of parties, candidates and politicians was intense and regular during the period monitored. Print media used a variety of formats to inform about political views and alternative platforms.

In their editorial lines most of the newspapers reflected a clear polarisation between the NCP and the SPLM and a clear concentration of the coverage on these two parties. As a matter of fact, most of the monitored media outlets provided either the NCP or the SPLM with the largest amount of print space. Overall these two parties were allotted 68% of the entire press coverage for the period observed while the other contesting parties received less attention. The data for editorial coverage showed that the two main political parties were allotted respectively 42% (NCP) and 26% (SPLM). The other actors obtaining substantial levels of coverage were Umma Party and Independent candidates with a 7% each.

Table 3 Allocation of space among political actors – aggregation by party

PARTY	Space
NCP	42%
SPLM	26%
UNP	7%
Independent	7%
Others[8]	6%
PCP	3%
DUPO	3%
DUP	3%
SPLM-DC	2%
URRP	2%
SCP	2%
Total	100%
Total in absolute values – cm2	*569620*

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[8] This category includes all parties that received less than 1% coverage: AA, ADP, ANCP, BC, BCP, DUSP, EDP, EPJD, FotS, FWP, HDP, ILP, IMP, Independent - SPLM, JAP, JNA, JP, LDP, MBO, MCP, MSOP, MSUP, NASP, NDA, NDFP, NDP, NDUF, NFDM, NIF, NJP, NLP, NNDP, NO, NOT, NPAP, NPP, NRenP, NRP, NSP, NUDP, NUP, Other, PCongP, PFDR, PSJP, RCP, SA, SANP, SANU, SAP, SBP, SConP, SDCMP, SDPCES, SFLP, SFNP, SLFOP, SNFGUP, SNFO, SNLP, SSDF, SSDP, SSoliDP, SUDPC, SUFP, UDF, UDP, UDSF, UDSPF, UDUP, UFP, UP, UP-C, UPopF, UPRD, USAP, USDF, USNP, USSP, WANUP, WBP

The tone used to cover political actors was mainly neutral even though some negative and positive reporting was observed, particularly in relation to the NCP and the SPLM. Furthermore those newspapers providing the largest coverage to one of the two main parties showed the highest negative coverage for the other parties, thus confirming a clear polarisation of the coverage related to elections and politics.

Chart 3 Tone of the coverage for political actors – aggregation by party
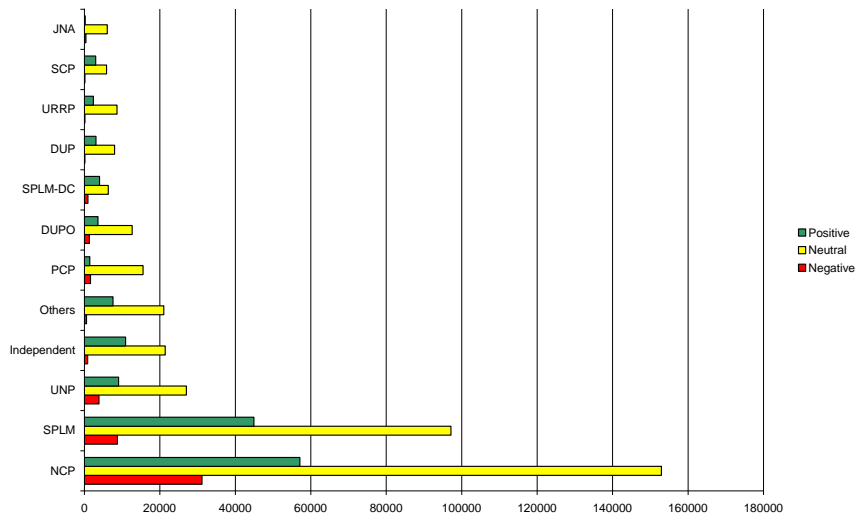
The candidate for the National Presidency enjoying the broadest exposure was President Al Bashir with 46% followed by Mr Yasir Arman with 33%. The other presidential candidates received more limited coverage, with the partial exception of Mr. Al-Sadiq Al-Mahdi with a 13% space. The two contestants for GoSS Presidency were also a relevant focus of journalistic reporting with President Kiir being the candidate receiving the widest coverage (82% of the overall space devoted to Goss Presidential candidates).

Chart 4 Allocation of space among
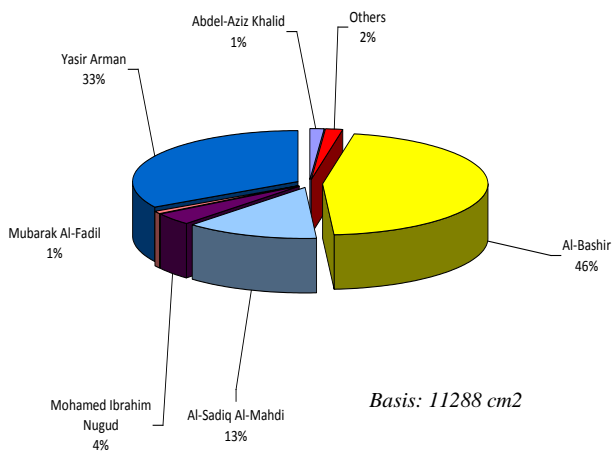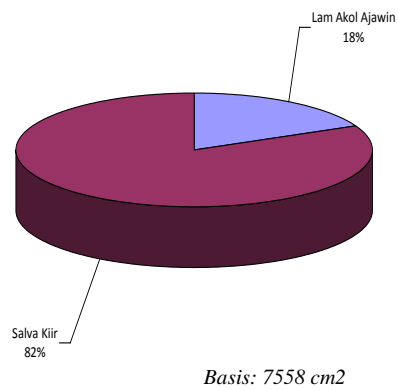
Presidential candidates - National

Chart 5 Allocation of space among

Presidential candidates - GoSS

Basis: 11288 cm2

Basis: 7558 cm2

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[9] The data on Coverage of Women and Women's Issues refer to the period 13 February – 5 March 2010.

Quantitative data regarding the coverage of politicians and candidates showed that women received very limited coverage in all the media monitored.

Within audiovisual media women politicians received an average of 5% of the total editorial time for television and 6% for radio. Most women represented were either party members or activists, while limited coverage was provided to women holding leading positions in the Executive Bodies – such as in the National and Goss Government - or at parties' level. Some substantial differences could be observed in the different media outlets in terms of allocation of airtime. Among televisions, Sudan TV and SSTV were the channels devoting the largest coverage to women candidates and politicians with respectively 6% and 8% of the overall time. Similarly, radios displayed different levels of attention for women with SSRT, Omdurman Radio, Peace Service, Radio Miraya and Khartoum State Radio devoting to female politicians higher levels of coverage than the average.

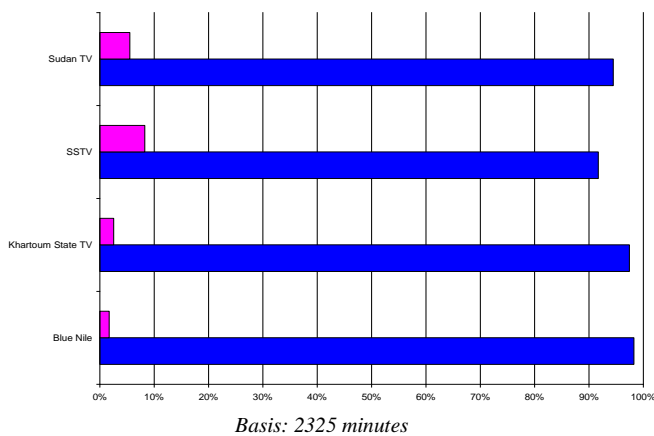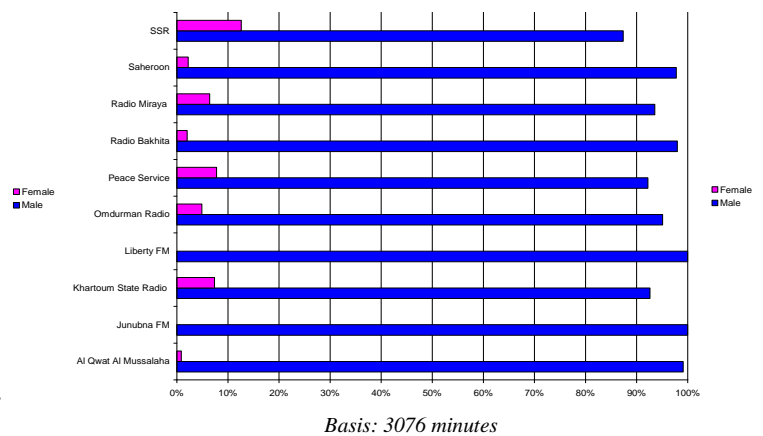**Chart 6 Allocation of time male and female politicians - TV**

Basis: 2325 minutes

Chart 7 Allocation of time male and female politicians - Radio

Basis: 3076 minutes

A similar editorial line was observable in relation to the press, where women politicians received an average of the 3% of the overall editorial space devoted to politics and elections. The under representation of women is common to all monitored print media, even though some differences could be observed, with Akhabar Alyoum, Al Sahfa, Juba Post and Southern Eye devoting higher space than the average to women.

Different from audiovisual media, women's visibility was clearly related to prominent roles and positions in the political sphere. As a matter of fact the women who received the highest journalistic attention were either members of the National Government or GoSS or party leaders.

Chart 8 Allocation of space between male and female politicians
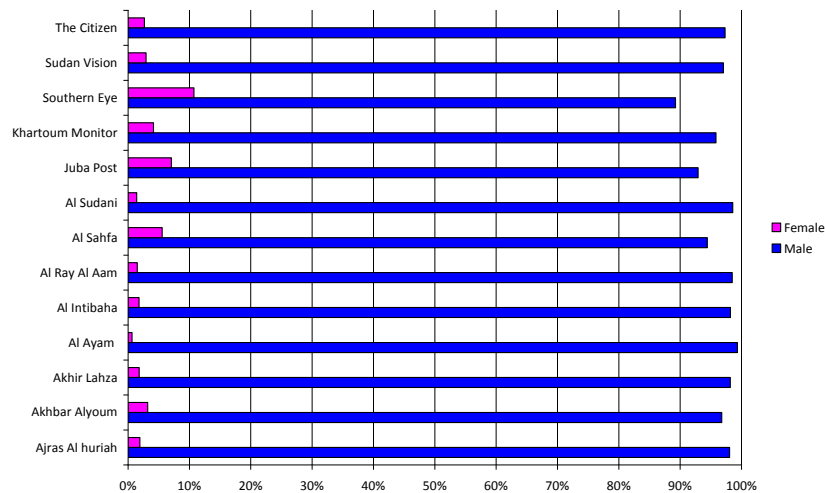
Basis: 500245 cm2

On a positive development, some prominent women were invited as opinion makers in talk show programmes over radio while some published a number of articles as editorialists in the press. In addition in a number of items the media covered the role of women in a democratic system as well as the need to increase women's role in politics, empowerment and mainstreaming[10].

V. Voters' Information on the Election Process[11]

The media informed on technical and operational aspects of the election process in a regular manner. Election supervisory bodies - namely the NEC and the States' High Committees for Elections (HCE) – and their activities received constant coverage. News mainly focussed on the achievements and targets reached by state administration for elections as well as on problems challenging a fair voting process. These included allegations of partiality of the NEC advanced by some parties, and rumours and discussions regarding the possibility to postpone elections.

Institutional information on how to vote and the number of ballot papers was limited to political programs and advertising both in print and audiovisual media. However, some radio stations provided on the spot information in a variety of formats including music programmes, dramas and talk shows.

Special targets of voter education were women and their right to vote. Furthermore, in their media coverage, parties and candidates focused on women and women's issues: they encouraged women to participate in the election and some candidates vehemently called for women to exercise their voting rights in autonomy and freedom.

Finally, a recurrent message put forward to voters – both by the media and the main stakeholders – stressed the importance of peaceful and fair elections.

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[10] Particularly this was the focus of a group of women parliamentarians that had a radio talk show.
[11] The data on Voters' Information refer to the period 13 February – 7 March 2010.

VI. Hate Speech in Election Coverage[12]

The number of explicit episodes of hate speech observed for the period in exam appeared relatively low and limited in scope both in terms of message and target groups.

A total of 101 cases were recorded during the period 13 February – 7 March, most of which in the print media.

Chart 9 Distribution of cases of hate speech by media sector

Basis: 101 cases
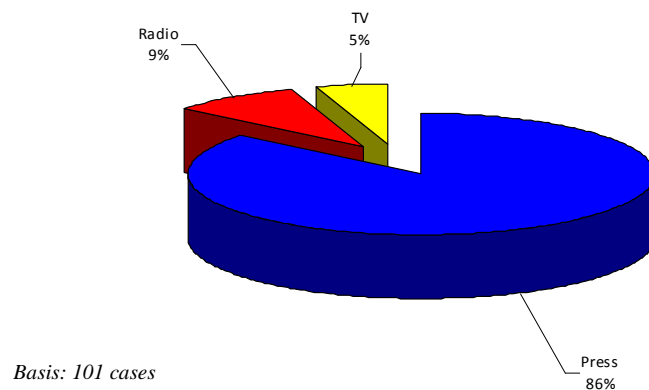
Most of the cases observed were related to a vehement style of campaigning and confrontation between the main contestants rather than on targeted calls to violence and discrimination. The most recursive type of inflammatory language concerned episodes of defamation among candidates (81 cases), while more serious cases – such as call for violence or calls for conflict escalation – appeared very limited (14 cases). Furthermore, when present, this kind of hate speech mainly involved topics regarding elections and contestants and they did not touch upon broader sectarian and ethnic issues and target groups.

Chart 10 Distribution of cases of hate speech by category

Basis: 101 cases

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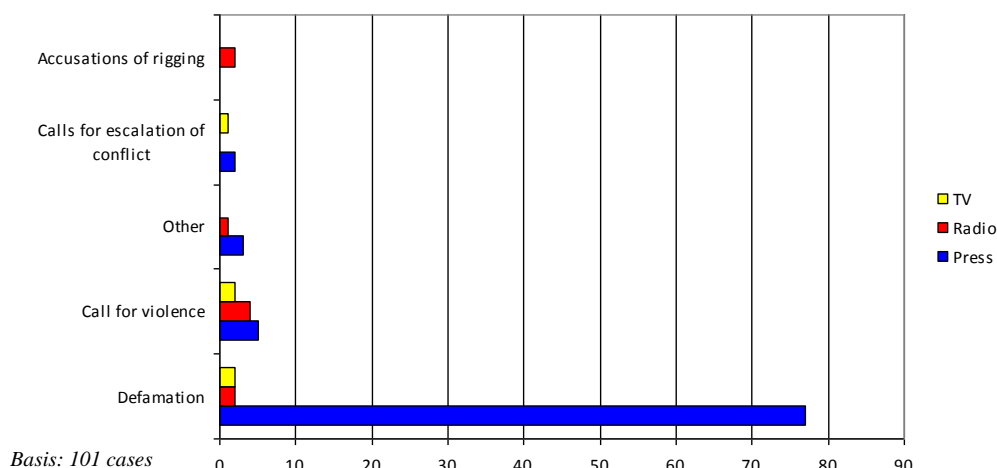
[12] The data on Hate Speech in Election Coverage refer to the period 13 February – 7 March 2010.

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This trend is confirmed by the analysis of the type of source[13] for hate speech as well as their targets[14]. Most of the speakers were either politicians and parties (53 cases) or the media themselves (36 cases). A few cases were observed where the public – viewers and readers – echoed strong calls for violence; nonetheless these cases were very limited and they could not be directly attributed to an editorial decision of the media. The majority of episodes regarding media as source of hate speech concerned print media (87 cases) rather then electronic outlets (14 cases). Similarly, the main targets for inflammatory speeches were politicians and election competitors (98 cases), while the presence of other categories appeared extremely limited (3 cases)[15].

Chart 11 Distribution of cases of hate speech by source
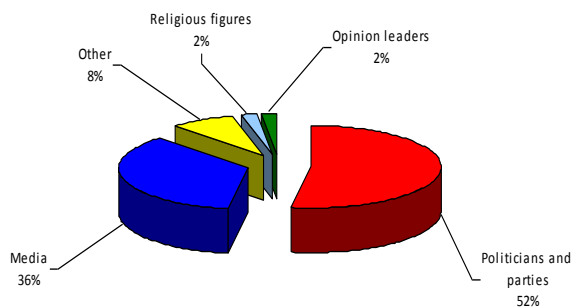
Chart 12 Distribution of cases of hate speech by target

Religious figures
2%

Opinion leaders
2%

Other
8%

Media
36%

Politicians and parties
52%

Basis: 101 cases

Public administration
1%

Civic society and international community
1%

Army, armed groups, law enforcement agencies
1%

Politicians and parties
97%

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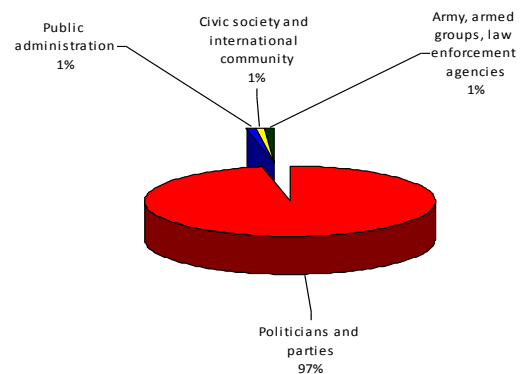
[13] The source is the person or group originating the hate speech, as reported by the media.

[14] The target is the individual or group against whom hate speech is directed, as reported by the media.

[15] The three cases observed involve election administration, calls against the international community and harsh criticism of the police.

Annex 1 – List of abbreviations for political parties

Party	Name
AA	Ansar Alsona
ADP	Awareness Democratic Party
ANCP	African National Congress Party
BCP	Beja Congress Party
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party - Al Digair
DUPO	Democratic Unionist Party - Original
DUSP	Democratic United Salvation Party
EDP	Eastern Democratic Party
EPJD	Eastern Party - Justice and Development
FotS	Front of the South
FWP	Free Will Party
HDP	Hagiga Democratic Party
ILP	Islamic Liberation Party
IMP	Islamic Moderate Party
JAP	Juba Alliance Party
JNA	Juba National Alliance
LDP	Liberal Democrats Party
MBO	Muslim Brothers Organisation
MP	Movement Party
MSOP	Modern Sudan Organisation Party
MSUP	Maoyst Socialist Unionist Party
NASP	Nassiri Arab Socialists Party
NCP	National Congress Party
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NDFP	National Democratic Front Party
NDP	National Democratic Party
NDUF	National Democratic United Front
NFDM	New Forces Democratic Movement
NIF	National Islamic Front
NJP	National Justice Party
NLP	National Liberation Party
NNDP	New National Democratic Party
NPAP	National People's Alliance Party
NPP	National Popular Party
NRenP	National Renaissance Party
NRP	National Reform Party
NSP	New Sudan Party
NUDP	Nassiri Unionist Democratic Party
NUP	National Unionist Party
Other	Other
PCongP	People's Congress Party
PCP	Popular Congress Party
PFDR	Peoples' Forces and Democratic Rights
PSJP	Progress and Social Justice Party
RCP	Revolutionist Committees Party
SA	Sudan Ana
SANP	Sudan African National Party
SANU	Sudan African National Union
SAP	Sudan Alliance Party
SBP	Sudanese Baath Party

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SConP	Sudanese Congress Party
SCP	Sudanese Communist Party
SDCMP	Sudanese Democratic Change Movement Party
SDPCES	Social Democratic Party Congress Eastern Sudan
SFLP	Sudanese Free Lions Party
SFNP	Sudanese Free National Party
SLFOP	Sudan Labour Forces Organisation Party
SNFGUP	South and North Funj General Union Party
SNFO	Sudanese National Front Organisation
SNLP	Sudanese National Labour Party
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SPLM-DC	DC - Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SSDF	South Sudan Democratic Forum
SSDP	Sudanese Socialist Democratic Party
SSoliDP	Sudanese Solidarity Democratic Party
SSUDF	South Sudan United Democratic Front
SUDPC	Sudanese United Democratic Party Congress
SUFP	Sudanese United Forces Party
SUNP	Sudanese United National Party
UDF	United Democratic Front
UDP	United Democratic Party
UDSPF	Union of Democratic Socialist Party Fatma
UDUP	United Democratic Unionist Party
UFP	Umma Federal Party
UNP	Umma National Party
UP-C	Umma Party - Collective
UPopF	United Popular Front
UPRD	Umma Party - Reform and Development
URRP	Umma Renewal and Reform Party
USAP	Union of the Sudanese African Parties
USDF	United Salvation Democratic Front
USNP	United Sudan National Party
USSP	United South Sudan Party
WANUP	Wadi Al-Neel Unionist Party
WBP	White Brigade Party

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