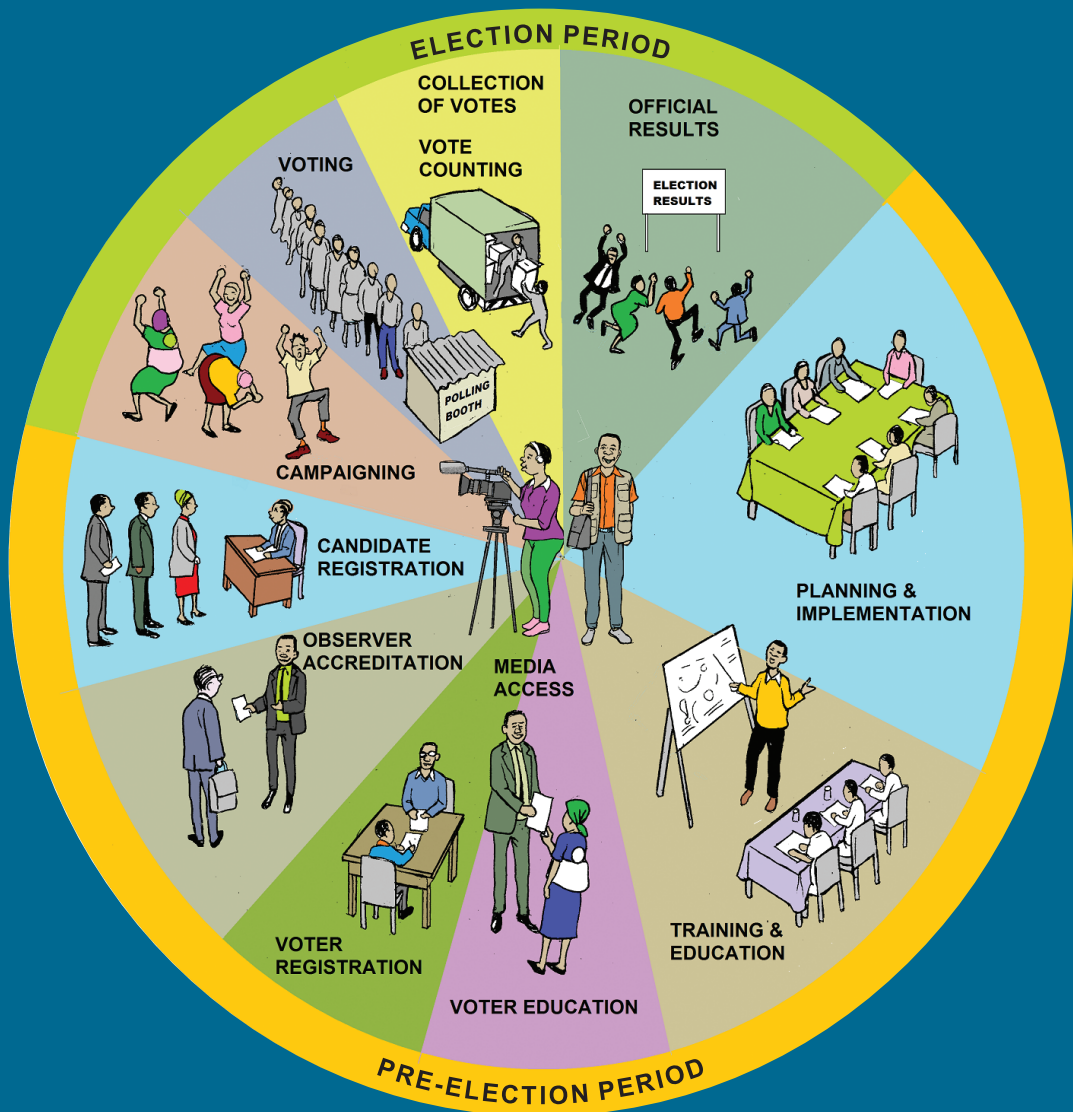


The Professional Election Reporter

MARCH 2018





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**Guidelines for Journalists Covering
Elections in Zimbabwe**

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FOREWORD

These guidelines – developed in cooperation between the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ) and International Media Support (IMS) – are intended to act as appropriate journalistic tools to help Zimbabwean journalists to make the most professional decisions about their role and responsibilities in reporting the 2018 elections.

The guidelines do not express one truth. Journalism is not an exact science. In journalism you can always debate what is right and what is wrong, but worldwide, journalists basically adhere to the same professional and ethical principles.

These generally-accepted principles will be reflected in the guidelines.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This election manual is a product of collaboration between the International Media Support (IMS) and Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ). It was produced with the assistance of the European Union and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of IMS and ZUJ and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union or the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The guidelines were written and edited by *Henrik Keith Hansen*, Media Advisor at IMS, with the assistance of Vincent Kahiya, a veteran journalist and media expert who has trained journalists locally and on the African continent, including presenting papers at major international conferences such as the World Editors' Forum and the Africa Media Leaders Forum.

Tribute goes to Dr. Admire Mare, Principal Consultant and Trainer at Tactics & Strategy Consulting, and Simbiso Marimbe – the IMS Program Manager-Zimbabwe and Gender Advisor – for the integration of gender considerations captured in this manual.

1

COVERING THE ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE – BE PROFESSIONAL

Nothing is more important for a journalist than covering national elections. Your country's future development is at stake. Which path do Zimbabweans want to take? With the recent ousting of long-time President Robert Mugabe, the elections in 2018 are a chance for the population to express their wishes for the future.

As journalists, we must do our utmost to serve the people and to inform and engage them to ensure that they understand what elections are about.

Fair elections, where everyone in the country feels they are represented, are key to any peaceful and democratic development.

Reporters Have the Responsibility to Support a Democratic Development

As journalists we have a responsibility that goes beyond our responsibility towards the owners of our media outlet. We have a responsibility to advance and support a democracy, building on freedom of expression. At the core of freedom of expression is always truthful reporting, where even the most powerful forces of the country must be subject to critical coverage. The more power you have, the more scrutiny you should expect.

But biased and unbalanced election coverage, sexist, inflammatory and hate-filled language, corrupted journalists taking bribes and missing out on the election issues that really matter to the voters are just some of the problems among African journalists covering national elections. This was the conclusion at *an expert meeting among African journalists, editors and researchers that IMS co-organised in Accra, Ghana in 2012. The situation does not seem to have improved since then.*

Corrupted Media in Zimbabwe: Some Journalists Are Regularly Receiving Bribes

A 2013 report: *“The State of Journalism Ethics in Zimbabwe”* highlights the taking of bribes as rampant among journalists in both the private and state media, adding that some journalists at ZTV revealed that they regularly receive bribes in exchange for positive coverage of certain prominent people.

“Those journalists in the state-controlled media do not write anything positive about the opposition and media practitioners working for independent newspaper don't even criticise the opposition. For example, if independent journalists criticise Morgan Tsvangirai and Welshman Ncube, they are labelled traitors, ZANU PF functionaries or operatives of the Central Intelligence Organisation,” said media analyst Zenzele Ndebele.

In Zimbabwe and other similar countries with democratic deficits, citizens usually believe that the media are mouthpieces for government and other powerful fractions of society. This is very often the case. But it is up to the individual journalist to show that he or she is **trustworthy**, and that he or she can be **fair and balanced** in the election coverage.

As journalists we must make sure that the political candidates raise the right issues like poor living conditions, jobs and the labour market, the standards of public schools and hospitals, environmental issues, discrimination and gender issues, food security and basic freedoms. As journalists, we must confront the candidates on behalf of the voters with these issues and ask the politicians what they intend to do to solve the problems.

*This is indeed what the coverage on an election campaign should be about: focussing on the **needs of the voters** more than focussing on the needs of the political candidates. We should remember that the politicians are representing the voters, and that the government use money and resources of the nation.*

But it seems as if journalists sometimes forget to raise these issues on behalf of the voters and instead let the politicians use journalists as their mouthpieces: dutifully running to their press briefings and carefully noting down their pronunciations without question.

Instead of making an election a platform for the voters, we often narrowly turn the campaign into a horse-race between the candidates, where we focus more on who will win than on who is likely to deal with the real issues that matter to the voters.

In Zimbabwe reporting elections can be a difficult journalistic task – and it might even be dangerous for the individual journalist – given the many chronicles of **journalists** being harassed, arrested, detained, or physically attacked in the course of their work. Certain safety procedures should therefore be followed, also taking note that women and men's safety requirements may differ and gender-related forms of harassment such as sexual harassment or rape may occur.

Journalists Are Protected By Rights

Remember that journalists are protected by rights guaranteed under Section 61 of the Zimbabwe Constitution, which guarantees freedom of expression, including media freedom and academic freedom, and in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ratified by 154 countries. These rights are also guaranteed by major regional conventions on human rights in Africa, the Americas and Europe.

The agreements recognise journalists' right to seek information, to receive it and to disseminate it freely without government interference. Government officials may not harass, intimidate or hinder journalists in the exercise of their responsibilities by any means whatsoever. Governments may not censor journalists or use their resources to unfairly influence them. Both female and male journalists are equally protected by the constitution to do their work freely. This is especially important to remember should we as journalists, ever feel pressured by public authorities.

2

THE BASIC STEPS IN THE ZIMBABWEAN ELECTORAL PROCESS

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) is a constitutional body mandated to conduct the electoral processes efficiently and fairly. It is obliged to put in place all the necessary logistics to ensure that the process runs smoothly.

In the 2018 election there will be a number of different elections that will take place at the same time. These will be direct elections for the Presidency, the 210 constituency seats in the National Assembly and the seats in the urban and rural local authorities.

Most voters will vote in these elections on the ordinary voting day. However, some persons, such as soldiers and police officers, who will not be able to vote on the normal polling day because they will perform security duties on that day will be permitted to vote in advance at special polling stations. Diplomats outside the country will be able to vote by post.

A number of seats in the Senate, the National Assembly and the Provincial Councils will be allocated on the basis of a party-list system of proportional representation

Biometric Voter Registration for the First Time

The 2018 elections are unique in that this is the first time Zimbabweans will be voting having registered through the Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) system. The BVR system is a technology that is used to capture unique physical features such as finger prints and/or facial scans for the purposes of identification. The biological and behavioural characteristics are stored in a database and used for identification of voters on polling day.

In the 2018 elections BVR will be used to collect this unique data to identify voters and help eliminate duplicates or multiple registrations due to malpractice, fraud and human error.

Political commentators, opposition parties and election think-tanks in Zimbabwe view the voter registration process as a fundamental factor in determining the outcome of the 2018 as well as future elections. There has been a fair share of controversy around the registration process amid reports that political activists were misinforming voters that the BVR system enabled them to know who had voted for whom.

3

VOTING IN ZIMBABWE: STEP BY STEP

Voters directly elect a president, 210 Members of Parliament and more than 9,000 councillors. Sixty women are appointed through proportional representation to the Lower House of Parliament, while 60 people are appointed into the Upper House, the Senate, via the same system. A 2013 Constitutional provision, under S124, guarantees these reserved seats for women. However, this law has a sunset clause that will come to an end in 2023.

- Voting usually starts at 0700 CAT and ends at 1900 Hrs. Vote tallying and counting starts immediately after the close of polls and results for council, parliament and president are posted outside each polling station.
- The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) announces winners for the Lower House of parliament in their respective constituencies, while results for president are announced at the commission's headquarters in Harare within five days of voting.

A presidential candidate requires 50 percent plus one vote for an outright win. In the event no candidate gets that, a run-off will be held between the top two contestants. This electoral system is referred to as first-past-the-post and is practised in a number of countries, including Zambia. It is different from proportional representation which is the system employed in South Africa.

What Are the Steps for Voting?

There are essentially six steps for voting:

1. An usher checks if a voter has the valid identification to vote and if he or she already has indelible ink on their finger (indicating that they have already voted).

2. The polling officer verifies the voter's registration status using biometric details of the voter, and if the name is found on the roll, the voter proceeds to the next step.
3. Once the voter is cleared, he or she is issued three officially-stamped ballot papers; for the President, Member of Parliament and Councillor.
4. From there, the voter's finger is marked with indelible ink to ensure she or he cannot vote again.
5. The voter then marks his or her ballot papers behind a privacy screen to ensure the secrecy of the vote.
6. The final step is for the voter to deposit her or his ballots into ballot boxes. The voter immediately leaves the polling station.

4

THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM: TRANSLATING VOTES INTO SEATS

1. The National Assembly consists 270 members. Out of this total, 210 will be directly elected from the 210 single-member constituencies into which Zimbabwe is divided. Those races will be decided by a plurality, first-past-the-post electoral system.

2. In addition to these 210 elected members, the National Assembly contains 60 reserved seats for women (six from each of the country's administrative 10 provinces). These reserved seats are elected under a party-list system of proportional representation, calculated at the provincial level and based on the provincial return of votes for parties who would have fielded candidates in the National Assembly constituency elections.
3. The Senate is made up of 80 senators. Of these, 60 (six from each of the 10 provinces) are elected through a party-list proportional system. Again, the results will be calculated at the provincial level based on the provincial return of parties whose candidates would have been nominated in the National Assembly constituency elections.
4. On each party list for Senate, male and female candidates are listed alternatively, with every list headed by a female candidate. Additionally, 16 of those Senators are Chiefs elected by the eight non-metropolitan provincial assemblies. Two Senators' positions are reserved for the President and Deputy President of the National Council of Chiefs. The remaining two senators (one male and one female) are elected by persons with disabilities.

5

WHO CAN BE ELECTED PRESIDENT?

According to Chapter 5, Part 2, Section 91&92 of Zimbabwe's Constitution, a person is qualified for election as President if he or she is:

- Registered as a voter;
- Has reached 40 years of age;
- Is a resident of Zimbabwe and;
- Is a Zimbabwean citizen by birth or descent.

A person is disqualified for election as President if he or she has already held office as President under this Constitution for two terms, whether continuous or not, and three or more years' service is deemed to be a full term.

The election of a President and Vice-Presidents must take place concurrently with every general election of MPs, provincial councils and local authorities.

Who is Eligible to Run as a Candidate in General Elections?

- To be elected as a member of the National Assembly or councillor, one must be registered as a voter and be at least 21 years old.
- To qualify for appointment as Senator, one must be registered as a voter and be at least 40 years of age.

6

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE JOURNALIST

When covering an election it is of immense importance to be clear about the role and responsibilities of the journalists and the media.

Every journalist covering an election has a big personal and professional responsibility to ensure that he or she acts professionally and in accordance with international standards.

Truth Is the First Victim of an Election

There is so much at stake during an election. Truth – like in wars – is often the first victim. As German statesman and chancellor Otto von Bismarck noted 150 years ago: “People never lie so much as after a hunt, during a war and before an election.”

Some politicians and powerful interests behind them will do anything to win the election, including bribing journalists and using them as instruments of misinformation. Politicians will find it cheaper to pay journalists to do their bidding instead of buying advertising space.

As journalists we need to act independently of the politicians and cannot be paid for any election stories we produce. Still many journalists accept payment or induce favours from political candidates to create biased and one-sided coverage of their preferred candidate. This is a corrupt practice that severely compromises our credibility and professionalism. It is simply unacceptable behaviour.

Even if a media outlet we work for may be affiliated to a certain political party, we must as journalists, still strive to be fair towards all parties and not let the political opinions of media owners dominate the news we produce. This is simply a question of fundamental journalistic ethics and fundamental professional pride.

However, reporters working for strictly controlled media outlets will usually be under severe pressure to produce stories that advance the opinions of their proprietors. These reporters are balancing on a sharp edge.

Ideally, our coverage should be guided by recommendations of a wide range of human rights organisations broadly endorsing that an election coverage “should encourage and facilitate a pluralistic expression of opinions” and make sure that no privileged treatment is given to public or any other authorities.

Our role is to help the citizens understand the key issues of the election in order to make the best possible decisions on whom to vote for, including informing them on how to participate, understand their rights, role and responsibilities in the electoral process. It is also the role of the media to inform voters about the political actors: About their visions, their policies and the effect of their politics. On a more personal level: Who is the political candidate? Does the candidate have a good track record? Is the candidate trustworthy or corrupt?

Do You and Your Media Organisation Have Democratic Responsibilities?

Consider this question carefully: Does your media house have any democratic responsibility to help ensure a peaceful, stable development in Zimbabwe?

If you can answer yes to this question, then remember that your role as a journalist covering an election is guided by the following;

- **Education:** To educate and inform the Zimbabwean citizens to understand the election process as well as what is at stake for your country;
- **Accuracy:** To give a balanced, accurate and fair coverage of the electoral process;
- **Intermediary:** To act as an intermediary between politicians and voters and to make sure that they listen to each other and;
- **Citizens:** To ensure that the citizenry's interests are covered in the election campaign.

7

PLANNING THE ELECTION COVERAGE

Planning is an important tool to achieve high quality election coverage and do more than just running after the latest Press conferences and announcements. Planning your election coverage involves undertaking many important actions before and during the election campaign.

Set Up Goals for Your Coverage

To effectively cover an election, editorial teams should start the planning of the election coverage by setting up goals for the way your media outlet intends to cover the elections. Develop the goals carefully in close co-operation with editors and reporters, then write down these goals and make them available for everybody in the organisation.

Setting up goals is an important process, because this makes editors and reporters focus on how to execute the best possible coverage instead of just waiting for the events to take place. It is simply a matter of being pro-active and to decide what kind of election stories will be of importance to the voters.

The goals can also be used as a guideline for the direction of your coverage as – in the heat of intense election campaigning, journalists tend to forget the general view. At least once a week, you and your colleagues should take a look at the goals you have set up to make sure that your coverage is on the right track.

Selecting and Covering Issues of Concern for the Citizens

Politics Means 'for the People'

The word 'politics' comes from the Greek word 'politicos', which means 'for the people'. So, any political election is about which politicians the citizens want as their leaders. This means that any election is for the citizens and not for the politicians representing them.

Professional election coverage for any journalist should be to bring out the needs of the citizens. That is, they should remain professionally-committed to the needs of the public.

Which are the issues of greatest concern to the citizens? Obviously, the citizens need to be well-informed about the electoral process. They must know about their rights and the rules regulating the election. Citizens also need to express themselves and make their voices heard and count.

But election coverage is more than just reporting on these important formalities. Have any surveys shown the primary concerns of the citizens, or do the reporters sense it from their daily contacts? Make a list of daily life issues of great importance to the citizens distinguishing concerns of women, men and youths. Ask representatives and candidates what they intend to do about these issues.

Do these daily life issues have anything to do with the electoral process, somebody might ask? Yes, politics is also about the lives of the citizens; Their safety, health, economic situation, housing, water supplies, schools, etc. An election is a good time to look at all these issues of great importance to diverse groups of citizens and assess how well the present government has performed, and if it has acted for the benefit of the citizens.

You have the professional choice to produce election stories based on your own professional ideas of these issues of concern to the citizens instead of just running to press briefings.

Get an Overview of the Announced Events

In the next phase of your planning you should try to get an overview of the announced events during the campaign and decide what you will cover. Gather all possible information about the announced political events and make a daily event-list, which should be ready early in the morning so that you can plan, using the list, how to use the resources at the editorial meeting in the morning.

Preparing Yourself for the Coverage of the Crucial Election Days

Covering the crucial election days is always very hectic, and you and your colleagues should make careful plans of how to approach it. Stick to your plans unless something unusual occurs.

When reporting on elections in Zimbabwe, where results have always been disputed, you should carefully report on the logistics of voting and remember to follow the vote counting process. Have a plan that includes interviews with ordinary citizens as well as influential and respected citizens from different areas or regions and ask them how they have experienced the voting process. Remember to check the views of election monitors and observers. Also keep an eye on security forces or gatherings of crowds of people. That might indicate that there is an important story unfolding.

If there are problems with the election process, you must report critically on this and hold the relevant people or authorities to account. Past experience should inform effective planning and key information resources such as electoral laws and reports from election management bodies and election watchdogs should be part of every journalist's itinerary.

The Important Days after the Election

Finally, do not forget to think about the days after the election. It is a common error in planning the coverage of an election that you either forget or do not have the energy to plan the extremely important days after the elections. But

this is the time for crucial negotiations, and it is the time for the winners, and not least the losers, to reflect and analyse the results of the election.

You should of course pay full attention to this decisive post-election process that can lead to anything from a new president, new government and new parliament, to instability, demonstrations and violence.

8

JOURNALISTIC CREDIBILITY: TRUTH, FAIRNESS AND BALANCE

Truth.

This is what it is all about. Respect for truth and for the right of the public to truth. According to the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) this is the first duty of the journalist.

And with truth comes reliable reporting. You must honestly collect and publish news and report in accordance with facts. Do not suppress important information. Your audience must trust your reporting. If they do not trust your reporting why should they bother to waste time on you?

Competent election coverage explores and presents a variety of opinions. In doing so, we can create the basis of a qualified discussion. And this is the core of any election; discussion of the challenges our country and its communities are facing, and what the political candidates can do to overcome these challenges. We must try our best to reflect on this in our election coverage.

The goal of any professional journalist should be to do a fair, balanced and impartial coverage. This should be the solid foundation on which all election coverage is based.

Lack of Balance in the Media Coverage of the 2013 Elections in Zimbabwe

“The two major political parties, ZANU PF and MDC-T, received fair coverage by the mainstream media. While the public media carried the voice of ZANU PF, the independent media carried that of MDC-T. At the end of the day, although not being the best media scenario, an unintentional balance was achieved in the coverage of the two major political parties. But the coverage was neither fair nor objective in the coverage of the non-preferred political parties.

The notion of fair, objective and balanced coverage in respect of other political parties as prescribed by SI 33 of 2008 was non-existent. Name-calling, inflammatory and hate language, particularly by guest writers, continued to characterize political coverage” – The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission Media Monitoring Committee.

According to the IFJ: ***“The journalist shall at all times defend . . . the right to fair comment and criticism.”*** Your reporting will lose credibility if it is just a platform for one-sided attacks on political opponents. An attacked part must always and without any exception, be given the opportunity comment on the attack.

Remember that any good journalist lets the audience sense that he or she has an important story to tell. Your audience must feel the importance of the election story. Modern journalism is critical and engaged – but always based on a high professional level of fairness.

Balance and proportional representation needs be taken good care of when you look at the election coverage in total.

Seeking balance in your coverage does not necessarily mean that each source should have exactly the same amount of space in each of your stories. Usually

the dominant parties will get the largest attention. The more powerful they are, the more attention they get.

Yet care must be taken not to neglect or downplay certain groups like minorities or others that usually do not have a voice in public. Further, it is important to ensure proportional representation of the diverse views in the story, avoiding gender discrimination in the sourcing of news as well as redressing gender stereotyping in the representation of voices.

When you look back and evaluate your election coverage, you should be able to say that each important player, as well as the public, and minorities who usually do not have a voice, have been heard.

Key Stats of Coverage of 2013 Elections in Zimbabwe: Lack of Balance

Of the 436 stories carried by state media on party activities and campaigns:

- 278 (64%) were on the activities of President Mugabe and his ZANU PF party.
- 126 (29%) were on the MDC-T and its leader, Morgan Tsvangirai.
- 15 (3%) were on the other MDC formation led by then Industry Minister Welshman Ncube.
- The remaining 17 (4%) were on small parties.

Of the 278 stories the State-run media carried on ZANU PF:

- 253 (91%) were positive.
- The remaining 25 (9%) were neutral.
- 112 (89%) of the 126 stories on the MDC-T were negative,
- 14 (11%) were neutral

Source: Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe

How to Be Fair and Balanced?

These recommendations on how to be fair and balanced during an election campaign were agreed on by a panel of African election reporting specialists gathered by IMS in Ghana in 2012:

- **Honesty:** Be honest. Tell the truth or what you strongly believe is the truth;
- **Balance:** All political sides, politicians as well as citizens should have access to your media outlet. Avoid covering only one side of the political parties or interviewing only one demographic group. Keep the balance and reflect a diversity of opinion;
- **Fairness:** Treat every political candidate fairly and *always* remember to give anybody who is attacked or criticized by others the opportunity to comment. Fairness involves loyally disseminating the main points of the candidates, but don't just hold the microphone. It is also your duty to ask critical questions on behalf of the citizens and challenge the opinions of the candidate. You do so not necessarily because you mistrust the candidate, but to help the candidate qualify his arguments and to make it easier for the citizens to understand these arguments.
- **Impartiality:** Try whatever you can to be impartial. Report election news in the language of the candidates unless they use inflammatory, stereotypical or sexist language, and separate facts from comments you quote. Remember to clearly emphasize comments with quotation marks and the name of the person behind the comment.
- **Facts-based:** Do not report rumours, check allegations. Don't be too selective with the facts and only present one side of the facts.
- **Neutrality:** Keep a distance from the story and forget your personal opinions and feelings, be non-partisan and don't openly identify yourself with any politicians. Naturally you can vote as a journalist and have

political sympathies, but you must have a professional attitude and not ignore election stories that are important for all or some of the voters. Also remember to leave out your own opinions from your election news coverage.

- **Responsibility:** Think of the possible consequences of your reporting. Will your reporting ignite hatred? Will your reporting damage ordinary citizens who are just expressing their views? If this is the case then skip your report.

9

FOLLOW THE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

The professional journalist lives up to the generally-accepted international standards of journalism, which are based on the ideals that the journalist always and without any exceptions will seek the truth in his or her reporting and not act as an instrument for somebody with specific political goals. Even though the journalist works for a media organisation with political aims, which many journalists do worldwide, he or she is expected to act professionally and to report truthfully.

Besides truth, another important aspect is news criteria, which Journalists use to judge if an election story needs to be published or not.

Use These News Criteria to Assess if an Election News Story Should be Published

When you cover the election campaign you should keep the following news criteria in mind, to consider if an election story is worth doing. If the election news you consider to produce do not score high on at least two of these news criteria, then do not produce it.

- **Importance**

Don't just run after anything that moves. Be careful in your selection. Aim

primarily at doing election stories that are important and of significance to Zimbabwe. On the other hand, take care that you not only produce stories of high importance as defined by the government and the ruling class. Connect the important daily life issues of the diverse citizen groups with your election reporting.

- ***Relevance***

People can often best relate to election stories with direct relevance to their daily life stories such as their personal safety, health, water and sanitation, schools, gender issues etc. These issues are considered of high relevance.

- ***Sensation***

Sensational stories are usually of great interest to your audience, but remember to distinguish between empty sensations like, for example, the private life of politicians, physical appearance, dress code and substantial sensations like events and developments of great importance.

- ***Identification***

It is often easier for voters to understand complicated election news if you can tell these stories through the lens of ordinary people and how they are affected by the electoral processes. This makes it easier for your audience to identify themselves with the theme of the election story. Watch out for a tendency to focus only on urban areas whilst obscuring rural areas.

- ***Constructive***

In any society, and not least less developed ones, there is a big need for so-called constructive election news. These are stories that provide constructive and successful solutions to problems and about people who have made an effort to change things for the better. Simply, election news can inspire Zimbabweans to seek constructive and positive solutions.

Ask Questions and Challenge the Politicians

- Remember that you are representing the citizens and asking questions on their behalf.
- Challenge the politicians on substantive issues by asking them simple questions like: "How will you do that?"
- "Why is this necessary?"
- "How will you finance this?"

Use Independent Experts to Supplement the Political Sources

- Experts from universities and research institutions, for example, can answer possible questions raised by a political statement. Watch out for gender biases in the selection of expert sources. From the Zimbabwean experience, there are calls for the media to make deliberate effort to include women experts in the stories.
- Experts can put your news story into perspective.
- Experts can assess if a political statement is true, realistic, legal etc.
- Experts can balance your news story.
- But be careful when calling an expert: The expert should be as independent as possible and not have any known political or private agendas. And if this is the case then disclose it in your election story.

Professional Journalists Are not just Stenographers – They Report

- Don't just hold the microphone for the politicians and don't just repeat all the words of the candidates – you are not a stenographer. Select and edit the news according to news value and relevance to your users
- Report details of where the report was given, the reactions of the citizens, the main opponents and independent experts etc.

Find Your Own News

- Although Press releases and Press conferences are vital sources of news, you should not just rely on officials to give you news – find it yourself.
- You should also find stories that reveal how the government operates or fails to operate in the interests of the citizens.

Make Political News Understandable

- Do not just copy and paste Press releases from the political players by adopting their news angles and use of language
- Find the relevant news angle and lead on that
- If possible, lead with the possible consequences of the political news

Tell the news story in a concrete and easily understandable language without any linguistic influence from the source behind the news story.

10

HANDLING HATE SPEECH AND INFLAMMATORY LANGUAGE

Inflammatory language is one of the most common causes of conflict. Just one wrong word or image can light a fire and create chaos. Language and images are very powerful tools and should be handled carefully and with great awareness.

Think before speaking or writing – and use one of the most important journalistic rules: Listen to sources and political candidates openly and without prejudice. This also includes listening for the meaning behind the words. Conflicts often arise because one party does not feel that they are being heard.

Our Words Can Kill – Be Careful

As a journalist you will have to be very sensitive and careful with your language and never deliberately try to offend or harm anybody. Sexist and stereotypical language should be avoided by all means.

Similarly, images can often have an even stronger impact than words, and cartoons can be like antibiotics directly into the veins – they have an instant effect. Be careful when publishing cartoons and images poking fun at others and situations– especially if the satire is about religion, gender, ethnicity or nationality.

A key facet of inflammatory language is hate speech, which vilifies a person or a group on the basis of race, colour, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, or other characteristics. Hate speech usually covers comments which are directed against a person or a particular group of persons.

Hate Speech Has Also Shown its Ugly Face in Zimbabwean Media

'Our comrade Robert Mugabe will romp to victory. We say so because we have no apology to make to any house nigger.' General Constantine Chiwenga, then head of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces, *The Herald* June 23, 2008

The recent history of Africa has seen several terrifying examples of hate speech in the media that have ignited brutal violence, but every journalist has a responsibility. And don't use the bad excuse that you were just quoting someone. If a source uses inflammatory language you must very carefully and in a dialogue with your editor consider if you should convey this message or not.

Our Right to Freedom of Expression is Not a Ticket for Us to Say Anything Without Considering the Consequences.

As journalists we sometimes suffer from the misunderstanding that the right to freedom of expression is the freedom to state anything, either in our own words or in the words of the sources that we quote. But unlike the right to freedom of thought, the right to freedom of expression is not an absolute right. The exercise of this freedom carries with it certain duties and responsibilities and is subject to restrictions concerning the protection of the rights of others.

This means that any decent journalist will not spread messages inciting, promoting or justifying hatred based on religious, ethnic or racial intolerance.

Inflammatory Language Disseminated by Zimbabwean Media

"We must strike fear into the heart of the white man, our real enemy. Make him tremble!"
– Former President Mugabe at the ZANU PF Conference in 2001.

*"This is up to you; if you want peace, you should vote for us. If you vote for the MDC, we will go to war" – Samuel Mumbengegwi, former Finance Minister, *The Financial Gazette*, June 19 2008*

As journalists we should be aware that such hateful expressions may have a greater and more damaging impact when disseminated through the media.

It is important to be aware of the distinction between the responsibility of the author of expressions of “hate speech” and that of the media for their dissemination of hate speech.

Inflammatory Language against Journalists in Zimbabwe

“Some journalists have indeed become not public opinion formers but character assassins, mal-informants to the point of having become embedded warmongers or they have become weapons of mass destruction. In their service to the foreign interests they apply strategies of blending half-truths and outright lies. These journalists masquerade as independent journalists despite the fact that we all know that they are paid by the enemies of the people. They become impeded house boys and girls” – The late Information and Publicity Minister Tichaona Jokonya.

Journalistic codes of ethics will always recommend journalists not to disseminate hate speech and not to use inflammatory language. But if the journalist – in the interest of the general public – deems it necessary to disseminate hateful statements he or she is strongly urged not to let these statements stand alone. Rather, they should always seek comments and reactions that will balance the picture, or as a minimum, to confront the sender of the hateful statements with critical questions.

What to Do When You Run into Hate Speech

The recommendations below on how to handle hate speech and inflammatory language during an election campaign were agreed on by a panel of African election reporting specialists gathered by IMS in Ghana in 2012:

- **Hate speech:** Avoid negative campaigns against certain groups and minorities in society, and avoid inflammatory metaphors negatively describing groups of society.
- **Insulting:** Do not use offensive wording and avoid insulting signs and symbols. If you quote a strong statement from a politician, insulting an opponent, do not publish it before you get a comment from the attacked party – and be careful to clearly mark the quote.
- **Inflammatory images and audio:** Avoid inflammatory videos, pictures, cartoons, audios etc.
- **Uncivil language and behaviour:** Journalist and private temper is fine, but be civilised: Don't shout and scream, and don't interrupt unnecessarily. Avoid name-calling.
- **Attacks on minorities:** Avoid xenophobia and disseminating attacks on ethnic minorities, foreign nationals, sexual minorities and other minority groups, who are easy targets by the majority. Avoid name-calling of another ethnic groups, stereotypes, bigotry and slurs.
- **Gender:** Be aware of sexist and discriminatory language about women. Do not treat women differently from men.

Spreading rumours: Be careful not to spread rumours. Always check facts and if possible get two sources independent of each other to verify if something is true.

11

USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO REACH YOUR AUDIENCE WHERE THEY ARE – AND TO ENGAGE THEM

Remember to plan for more than your original media platform. You also have to create content for digital platforms, which are most-used by your Zimbabwean audience. This was clearly demonstrated in the weeks leading up to ex-President Robert Mugabe's last days in power in November 2017.

The mobile networks of the country were under tremendous pressure and the data usage was enormous, because people chose to stay on social media to remain informed and to share news with one another on platforms such as *Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and Instagram etc.*

Often, it does not take extra time to deliver something useful on these platforms.

TV news, radio and newspapers are still very relevant but do not reach everyone in Zimbabwe. Mobile phones have much higher penetration, and smartphones are exploding in use. Together, with the many new social media platforms, this has opened new avenues to communicate with the audience and not least the **young audience** – a group of voters that are generally very difficult to reach using traditional media. This essential audience segment is heavily active on **social media**.

Social media in Zimbabwe has grown to become more than just platforms for sharing selfies and silly videos. This means that you will have to be serious about these platforms and devise ways of how to efficiently use them to distribute your content in innovative ways and to reach new and often younger audiences.

Digital media are brilliant methods to captivate and engage your audience and to get into a dialogue with them. These media platforms make it easier for you as a journalist to communicate with your audience. Grab this great opportunity and invite your audience to come up with ideas for your election coverage and ask them what they think about the coverage. The direct communication with your audience is a chance that you should not miss.

While this appears to confront what we perceive as journalism, chatting with the users is an excellent way of creating loyalty between yourself and your audience and to make your users feel that they are part of a community. Social media-chatting and the new notion of conversational journalism is becoming the norm.

Digital media and growing access to mobile phones also give you some unique possibilities to involve your audience directly in the election coverage and make them co-creators of content. You can simply ask them to help and contribute with photos and videos of relevance to your election coverage.

There are many great examples from elections in other countries where citizens have documented fraud and cheating at polling stations. Ask your audience to be your helpers and to ensure a fair and just election without fraud.

In other words, you will have to produce relevant election content for the social media platforms that you consider the most important in Zimbabwe and for your specific audience.

In the following we will look at the possibilities of integrating the three most popular social media in Zimbabwe in your election coverage: *Facebook*, *WhatsApp* and *Twitter*.

Fake News a Danger on All Social Media

The great communicative potential of social media should not overshadow its dangers and the risk of fake news carried out by manipulative and cynical forces that deliberately produce false election stories with the purpose to mislead the public.

Don't take anything published on social media for granted and remember that there is no editorial control with social media. The editorial gatekeepers and quality controllers from the traditional newsrooms are *not* part of the ecosystem of social media.

People can publish anything on social media, including anything that they have made up in their minds. If you intend to re-publish information you have found on *Facebook* and other social media you should carefully double-check the sources the story originates from. The more extreme and hateful the content is, the more you should be aware of the risk of fake news.

Social Media Re-enforcing Echo Chambers and Prejudices

In the recent past it has become evident that social media contain the risk of evolving into narrow echo chambers, where users only search for content that supports their own political opinions. As a result, they are not exposed to content that could broaden their knowledge.

It must also be known that the complicated algorithms created by IT-designers working for the social media platforms decide what will be prioritised in the social media newsfeeds of the users. These algorithms are designed to make sure that the computer of the user pushes more of the same type of content that the user has already shown a special interest in via his or her search history, likes, comments, shares etc. This means that the algorithms are not designed to present a balanced picture, which should be the aim of professional media.

As Douglas Alexander, strategist from the UK Labour Party writes in 'The Guardian' March 17, 2015:

"We are used to a politics where we share facts, but diverge on opinion. We are confronting increasingly, because of the rise of social media, a politics where people's social media feeds can be an echo chamber for, at best, their own opinions and, at worst, their own prejudices. And that's a tough challenge for all democratic politicians."

Facebook: An Efficient Platform to Engage Your Audience

Facebook has grown to become the world's largest social media platform which is used by more people in the world than any other social media. Today Facebook is an indispensable part of the news and election coverage of most established media in the world.

Politicians have long understood how efficient Facebook is for them to communicate directly with potential voters without the editorial filter of the serious news media. This makes Facebook profiles of political candidates an interesting place to check how they communicate with their voters, what they promise and how they tackle questions from the voters. And as a journalist you can also interact directly with the candidates on their Facebook profiles. In other words, this is a good place to get story ideas.

You can easily make Facebook-updates on the Facebook account of your media organisation. But don't just re-publish or link to your election stories published at your original media platform or your website. Facebook users want the content right now and with no delays or detours.

Increasing Audience Engagement on Facebook

1. Let your breaking election news break on *Facebook* and your website simultaneously – Breaking news always create bigger user-engagement than anything else.
2. Give very short regular news updates on *Facebook*, while your election story is evolving. This shows that you are on the spot serving your audience – and more will come.
3. Use a conversational tone, where your audience feel you are a reporter of flesh and blood and that you are right there in the middle of the important political events.
4. Take your audience by the hand and include explanatory elements making sure your audience understand you – this will also increase their engagement and they will be more prone to like, comment or share your *Facebook* story.
5. Start a conversation with your audience by asking them some questions related to the election campaign, and if you remember to answer them you will experience more active and engaged users.
6. Invite the users behind the scenes and show them how you work to get the best possible election story for them.
7. Vary your *Facebook* posts between short updates, questions and answers, photos, videos, surveys etc. and you will maintain the engagement of your audience.

It has become unusually easy to produce quality video on your mobile phone and to upload the video directly from your phone to *Facebook* and other digital platforms. Video is very popular in digital media and increases the chance that your audience will see your story, share it and engage in it. Remember that your video must give a motive in the first three seconds to attract readers' attention, otherwise they will skip it and scroll on to something else.

Even though a professional photographer or cameraman can do a better job, all election reporters should have the responsibility to take photos and videos with their mobile phones, when they cover election.

Facebook Live is another obvious feature to use. Get your reporters out there, where the most important election stories are unfolding and let them use their smart phones to transmit live from any important election event.

***WhatsApp*: Let Your Audience Sign up for Your Biggest Election News**

For an increasing number of Zimbabwean newsgroups within the chat and messaging app, *WhatsApp* have become their primary source of news. This reality should be reflected in your election coverage.

You can use *WhatsApp* to push out not only text messages but also short audio bulletins and other updates related to the election.

Some media organisations have created very simple formats for the use of *WhatsApp* as part of their election coverage. Under the headline “*What’s the one thing you need to know today to help you make an informed choice on election day?*” you can in a very short format give those subscribing to your *WhatsApp* service the key headlines of the most important election story of the day.

You just have to tell your audience which telephone number they can join to get these updates. This is a very easy way of getting into contact with your audience where they are most active.

Most people use *WhatsApp* to have group chats – but as a news organisation you can use *WhatsApp’s* Broadcast Message feature to publish your updates. The advantages are that users cannot see each other’s details (particularly useful if you’re concerned about data protection issues), and users do not know how many other recipients there are (useful if you have small subscriber numbers and do not wish that to be obvious).

If you want input from your users – and this can often pay off – for example in the shape of what is on top of their agenda or how the campaign is unfolding in their area, just set up a normal group chat.

Announce your election service on all your platforms and explain how it works. Users will have to add you to their contacts and then send you a *WhatsApp* message, which isn’t as straightforward as following you on other platforms, so you need to sell the benefits of your *WhatsApp* service.

Don’t flood your chat group-members with news. This will annoy them. Only select the two or three most important election news of the day.

Don't flood your chat group-members with news. This will annoy them. Only select the two or three most important election news of the day.

Remember to offer more than just textual updates. Use all possibilities of being visual – and the very easy audio function as well.

Twitter: A powerful Tool for Journalists Covering Elections

Twitter is a powerful tool in election campaigns. Political candidates, parties, journalists, and increasingly the public are using *Twitter* to comment on, interact around, and research public reactions to politics and elections.

In many parts of the world, *Twitter* is where the live conversation about elections is happening. But *Twitter* is also a great tool for election reporters to find stories, join conversations, build audiences and make new contacts. There is plenty you can do to help you find story ideas and break news first.

There is also a critical role for journalists to play in making sense of the millions of tweets that flow every day on *Twitter*. Several studies have shown how people want news via *Twitter* to be verified by a respected brand and by trusted journalists. As a serious reporter this is your chance.

On *PressGazette.co.uk* Joanna Garey, head of UK news partnerships for *Twitter*, has published a list of tips on how to optimise your use of *Twitter* during elections.

Optimizing Your Use of Twitter

1. Search

Effective use of search is an easy way to optimise your use of *Twitter*:

- A. *Tweet Deck* is a free-to-use tool for uncovering new content on *Twitter*. You can search, add lists and get advanced with what you are looking for. Use complex and advanced search strings to monitor for great stories more effectively.

- B. **Hashtags** to follow can also be a great way to get to the heart of the conversation. Free tools such as *hashtagify.me* suggest related hashtags for important issues.
- C. Set up **alerts** to enable you to receive an SMS every time a specific account tweets.
- D. Twitter's **Advanced Search** page can help you to compose these searches yourself.

2. Lists

Lists are a must-have tool for any professional *Twitter* user. **Build your own** election lists (which can be kept private) so you can see tweets from selected accounts at a glance.

If you want to know every time a candidate mentions your patch, you just have to add a *Twitter* list to *Tweet* Deck and filter for mentions of your local area. You do not need to understand advanced search to do this. You could use the same list to monitor a national topic.

3. Increase engagement with visuals

Pictures can increase retweets by an average of 27% for news-related *Twitter* accounts. There are lots of ways to add media to your tweets to boost engagement: Upload. Don't forget to tag the people in it.

4. Build your audience

How do you grow your *Twitter* followers?

- A. Live-tweet.
- B. **Promote your account** next to your stories online, in print and on screen. If someone follows your *Twitter* account they are more likely to click on an article again within the same week.
- C. **Be easy to find:** *Twitter* users search for words such as "politics", "political" or "general election"- use them in your bio and tweets so people can find you. "political" or "general election"- use them in your bio and tweets so people can find you.

- D. **Be yourself:** Being friendly, engaging and authentic is usually a better way to win people over than being aggressively self-promotional.

5. Use analytics

Take control of your own account and learn what works with your audience. Log into *Twitter's* free tool *analytics.twitter.com* and find out what's working for you, see how your followers are growing over time and see how far your tweets spread (by engagements and impressions) and check out how many people go on to click on your stories.

12

ETHICS IN ELECTION REPORTING

Ethics are about the choices you make as a reporter.

Some of the most difficult ethical dilemmas in the media involve people's – and very often politicians' – privacy. You might have the legal right to publish a story, but do you also have the moral right? This is the key question in ethical reporting. Ethics are about the choices you make as a reporter: Should you do the news story or should you let it go?

Ethical dilemmas are often particularly difficult in political reporting, especially in times of elections, where political opponents usually try to undermine the credibility of their opponents by smearing them through digging up private stories from their past and – in some cases – fabricating false stories.

There is rarely one right decision. Editors and reporters using the same moral reasoning may come up with different decisions. Below is a fair guideline.

To Publish or not to Publish

Only publish private information about public officials and politicians if their private doings negatively affect their public duties.

So you must be well aware of your own ethical standards: What will you publish, and what will you not publish? Will you publish a story that you know is false or grossly exaggerated? Hopefully not, because then you are an immoral cheater.

13

JOURNALISM AND GENDER ISSUES

Gender Roles in the Media

Media plays a large role in creating social norms, because various forms of media, including advertisements, television, and film, are present in most societies. Gender roles, as an example, exist solely because society as a whole chooses to accept them, but they are largely perpetuated by the media. It is important for journalists to be aware of gender issues to watch out for in election reporting because women and men are affected differently by electoral processes.

Gender Representation and Portrayal

Journalists must be aware of what the media is presenting to them, and make sure they are not actively participating in a culture of gender discrimination. A

primary way in which media distort reality is in underrepresenting women. For example, the Global Media Monitoring project (GMMP) report of 2015 shows that women make up only 24% of the persons heard, read about or seen in newspaper, television and radio news, exactly as they did in 2010. The same report also states that, *'Women's relative invisibility in traditional news media has crossed over into digital news delivery platforms: Only 26% of the people in Internet news stories and media news Tweets combined are women.'*

This is glaring during electoral contests where male candidates are often covered extensively ahead of female candidates. Elections are presented as male contests with females being presented as voters, cheerleaders and rally attendees. Media Monitors 2013 reports show that women's voices accounted for only 14% of voices covered in political stories. Journalists can make deliberate effort to ensure that their reportage cover perspectives of both women and men equally without prejudice. Voices of both women candidates and female voters should be accorded equal space in media debates and media coverage. Journalists can enhance the quality of their coverage of the electoral process if they are able to distinguish the different experiences of women and men in the electoral processes.

Gender Stereotyping

Gender stereotypes are socially constructed beliefs about men and women. They are constructed through sayings, songs, proverbs, the media, religion, custom, culture, education, drama etc. Social media jokes and cartoons tend to depict women in very stereotypical ways which reinforces discrimination and unjust gender practices. Messages and memes in the media carry significant messages about cultural norms and values, but also norms of gendered relations for both men and women. It is important for any progressive journalist to be aware of the gender concerns related to the portrayal of both men and women on media platforms.

Political Violence and Sexism

Women and men experience politically motivated violence differently during

electoral periods. Women suffer the extra burden of sexual violence and gender-based violence linked to political violence. Journalists can help expose cases of gender-based violence linked to political violence. Journalists should also look out for cases of sexual abuse and harassment during electoral periods, especially among political party candidates. Sexist language often used to intimidate women candidates and voters should be avoided by all media. For example, describing women candidates or voters by their physical looks and dressing is in most cases tantamount to subjecting them to sexism and stereotyping.

The media's multiple contributions to elections can also be applied to addressing gender discrimination and promoting equal participation, for example:

- **Media as watchdog:** As a journalist, you can include questions of gender discrimination in its accountability remit. Is the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, ZEC, properly addressing access for female voters? Are political parties practicing gender stereotyping and discrimination?
- **Media as civic educator:** You can also increase the use of a range of images of women and men in different roles, challenging stereotypes.
- **Media as campaign platform:** in your interactions with political parties, you can encourage parties to put forward female spokespeople and use a range of images of women and men.
- **Media as public voice, analyst and interpreter:** You can encourage dialogue that includes a diversity of voices, and provide analysis that uses women as experts and includes a gender lens on a range of topics.

Suggestions for gender reporting:

You can highlight the following issues:

- How many female and male candidates are intending to run for the primary elections in their respective parties? How many of them are going to be appointed via the quota system? How fair is the competition between female and male candidates within political parties?
- How can journalists amplify the voices of female candidates and female voters in the electoral debates?
- What does the Constitution say about the proportional representation? Are political parties adhering to the constitutional clauses?
- What are the challenges and opportunities facing women in the electoral processes of voter registration, accessing voter information, during the campaign period, on the polling day and during the post-election periods?

Reflection

Reflect on one of the stories with election headlines in both print and online media today. Identify the gender imbalances in the stories. Discuss how each story could have been improved in terms of representation of women's voices and portrayal of women as key sources or expert sources.

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SETTING RULES FOR STAFF COVERING ELECTIONS

If your media outlet does not have guidelines regulating the behaviour of its journalists during an election it might be a good idea for the editors to consider this:

Simple Guidelines to Regulate the Behaviour of the Journalists

- Set guidelines on accepting payments and gifts from politicians and candidates: As a general rule this practice should not be accepted.
- Set restrictions on reporters' and editors' political activities: Generally, journalists covering elections should not be political activists, even though it is their right to be members of a political party and to vote.

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SAFETY FOR ZIMBABWEAN JOURNALISTS COVERING THE ELECTIONS

The operating environment for journalists in Zimbabwe is generally classified as poor due to state and non-state players' archaic perception of media. There have been attempts to improve the media law regime in Zimbabwe through the current Constitution, which guarantees Freedom of expression and freedom of the media (Section 61) and right to Access to information (Section 62).

Despite these constitutional guarantees, the laws governing the media have not been aligned to the Constitution. Worse, there is no serious attempt to ensure that the police and other state security arms protect media practitioners in their execution of duty.

Journalists are still arrested, detained, harassed and beaten up by police for just doing their work. Police have visited media organisations to pick up journalists and coerce them to reveal their sources. This is despite constitutional guarantees protecting sources of information to the media.

Access to information has remained difficult despite constitutional guarantees. For the purpose of election coverage, this is an area of major worry for the media as journalists often find it difficult to access disaggregated data on voter registration, information on the recruitment of election officers and the procurement of electoral materials like ballot papers.

This is despite the fact that the state is obliged to make such information available.

The country goes into an election after the ouster of President Mugabe. The army immediately took up key civilian responsibilities after the ouster. In the process of pushing out Mugabe, the military warned the media to **“report responsibly”**.

This appeared to have a big chilling effect on the media, especially the usually outspoken private Press, which in the days following the ouster of President Mugabe became shrill and appeared to report from a set script.

The military in December announced that it was withdrawing and returning civic duties to the police but the media appear to be moving with immense caution.

The media environment under the post-Mugabe political period therefore still poses a threat to media practitioners on the ground. The risks of arrest, detention, assault and losing equipment remain. These risks are likely to be accentuated when journalists are sent out to cover the election in areas outside urban areas. Freedom of movement for journalists and their general safety is not really guaranteed at the moment.

Lately though, dialogue between the media and the police has improved culminating in the crafting of a resolution with guidelines for the police and media to follow. However, these are general guidelines, not necessarily crafted for elections

Guidelines to Improve Relations between Police and Journalists, Agreed on December 21 2017

1. The police and the media agreed to improve and strengthen relations through quarterly meetings and continuous engagement and that the first of such meetings is scheduled for March 2018.
2. It was agreed that a safe working environment should be created for journalists through training of police officers on the role of journalists.
3. Any form of assault on journalists during the lawful performance of their duties should be reported and dealt with by the police as enshrined in their mandate (detecting, investigating and preventing crime) and the outcome of report communicated.
4. It was also agreed that journalists approach and introduce themselves to ground commanders whenever there are public disorder situations and in cases where they are aggrieved.

5. Where police have concerns with the media, they should engage professional bodies such as MISA, ZUJ or VMCZ to encourage professionalism and accountability.
6. The media should encourage members of the public who approach them with stories of a criminal nature to report to the police at their earliest convenience, so that investigations can be done.
7. The media pledged that it is committed to ensure fair, accurate and balanced reporting and to correct inaccurate stories sincerely and without prejudice.
8. ZUJ, Media Alliance of Zimbabwe and MISA must convene meetings with the Zimbabwe National Editors Forum and media houses on the need to assign specialised reporters to cover the crime beat.
9. On the issue of addressing police officers by their proper ranks, the police undertook to provide media houses with the correct rank structures during interactions with media houses and journalism students.
10. The police pledged to conduct outreach programmes and conduct lectures/meetings with media houses, training institutions and newsrooms to sensitize them on police operations and
11. To conduct a tour of media houses and customer care outreach programmes where the media is invited.
12. The media and the police should avoid the use and communication of hate language and hate language should be reported to relevant professional bodies and authorities.

How to Reduce Risks

- **Use Safety Manuals**
Safety manuals have guidelines for minimizing risk, and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has made their universal Journalist Security Guide easily available on their website.

- **Risk assessment and management**
It is important that the management of media houses are well-equipped to assess risks in advance before assigning teams to the

field. They also need to have the capacity to act on incidents where their staff or institution is exposed to risks.

- **Prevention and response**

Train journalists covering dangerous or risky assignments in order to equip them with skills such as first aid, basic rules to follow, use of communication systems, dressing behaviour and offer psychological support when needed.

- **Consider gender**

Establish special protection measures to address gender sensitive issues in order to be able to assign female reporters to the field, which can give a more equal coverage of women. Take note that excluding women from political or election related assignments only serves to discriminate them and not to protect them. Safety strategies should ensure that women are equipped to take up assignments on a gender equal basis.

For the backflip of the guidelines

REPORTER, REMEMBER THIS

- **Ethical standards:** Know the ethical standards and code of conduct for journalists. If not, you risk biased or incorrect reporting that can put yourself, your media house and your colleagues at risk.
- **Truth:** Always seek the truth or what you honestly believe is the truth and report these truthful facts.
- **Serve your fellow citizens:** Remind yourself that an election is about politics and that this comes from the Greek word 'politicos', which means '**for the citizens**'. Your election reporting should always be in the interest of the citizens

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