CONTRIBUTING TO CHANGE

Supporting Zimbabwe's media

ims

INTERNATIONAL
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Contents

Acronyms and abbreviations

AIPPA	Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act
AU	African Union
BSA	Broadcasting Services Act
COPAC	Constitution Parliamentary Select Committee
GNU	Government of National Unity
GPA	Global Political Agreement
IMPI	Information and Media Panel of Inquiry
IMS	International Media Support
MAZ	Media Alliance of Zimbabwe
MDC-T	Movement for Democratic Change – Tsvangirai
MISA	Media Institute of Southern Africa
SADC	Southern African Development Community
VMCZ	Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe
ZACRAS	Zimbabwe Association of Community Radio Stations
Zanu PF	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
ZBC	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation
ZiNEF	Zimbabwe National Editors Forum
ZMP	Zimbabwe Media Programme
ZUJ	Zimbabwe Union of Journalists

Foreword

It is my pleasure to introduce this report on the contribution of International Media Support and our partners to important changes in the Zimbabwean media sector over the past decade. Impact—or 'contribution towards change' as we term it in this report—is often an elusive, hard-to-illustrate product of our combined efforts as media development organisations, donors and partners in the contexts in which we work. But, as this report and the methodology behind it hopefully demonstrate, it is not impossible to document and communicate impact in an illustrative and accessible way.

First launched in 2005, the Zimbabwe Media Programme's support to Zimbabwe's media workers and media institutions, has grown gradually and organically over the years. As this report details, one of the more notable changes that the programme has successfully contributed towards, is the inclusion of improved freedom of expression and access to information provisions in Zimbabwe's 2013 constitution. Through a national strategy for the development of the country's media driven by the needs and demands of media sector stakeholders, this successful contribution built on a solid foundation of close collaboration between media and civil society inside the country as well as among international media development actors and donors outside it. It reflects a real-world manifestation of key aid effectiveness principles that include national ownership, alignment, harmonisation and mutual accountability. Principles that IMS, our partners and our donors strive for so that we may improve the quality, and indeed further the impact, of our combined efforts.

Despite the successful work of the Zimbabwe Media Programme, plenty of challenges lie ahead. In February 2015, nearly two years after Zimbabwe's new constitution was approved full of democratic promises, the vast majority of its new provisions had still not been implemented through law or practice. To deepen the existing results of the work of the Zimbabwe Media Programme and to further the democratic reform of the media sector overall, everyone involved needs to be ready to leverage the opportunities that arrive as the social, political and economic landscape in the country continues to evolve. That means we must continue to support the critical work of our media and civil society partners in Zimbabwe so that they are ready to seize new opportunities to expand on the democratic gains they have worked so hard to achieve.

Jesper Højberg

Executive Director
International Media Support (IMS)

Introduction

Against all odds, profound changes have occurred within Zimbabwe's embattled media sector over the past decade. A doggedly determined group of media workers, media houses and media support organisations has made a significant contribution to these changes through the Zimbabwe Media Programme (ZMP): a collaborative media development effort initiated in 2005 at one of the lowest points in the Zimbabwean media's struggle for greater freedom and independence.

The idea for this study came in the wake of Zimbabwe's 2013 election, which saw President Robert Mugabe's Zanu PF party tighten its grip on power. ZMP partners were, once again, bracing themselves for what many assumed would be the inevitable backlash against media and other sections of civil society that had not towed the ruling party line.

The somber mood belied the fact that the country's media landscape had actually improved considerably since 2005, when the seeds for the ZMP were sown at a meeting between representatives of the Zimbabwean media and international media development organisations. Back then, few realistically envisaged Zimbabwe having a constitution that not only guarantees media freedom and access to information, but also the impartiality of state owned media.

There had been other, more subtle changes too. The question was: How had these changes come about? And, of equal importance to those involved in the ZMP: What had been the programme's contribution, if any, to these changes?

In an attempt to answer these questions, the ZMP sought to enable those directly involved in the programme to document, in their own words and images, the stories behind what they believe have been the most significant changes in the media landscape since 2005. For this, the programme adapted the Most Significant Change monitoring and evaluation method, and combined it with participatory media production and conventional journalism techniques (see 'Methodology' section in the appendices of this report).

Part 1 of the report pulls together and analyses the study's various findings, taking into account Zimbabwe's current political and economic situation. The study builds on stories told by programme partners and staff who have been at the forefront of the changes that have occurred. We sought to verify these accounts and also to identify what hadn't changed, in order to produce a rounded picture of the change processes that, in turn, could inform the design of the next phase of the ZMP.

But before doing any of this, we needed to remind ourselves what the media landscape actually looked like in 2005. From small and impecunious beginnings, the ZMP evolved in response to the fluctuating needs and priorities of the Zimbabwean media operating in a highly volatile environment.

It was only in the light of these early experiences and experiments that the programme was able, several years later, to identify more precisely the outcomes it was striving for and the indicators that would show how far it had come. Which meant the programme did not have readily available baseline information from 2005 with which to compare evidence gathered during the study.

Zimbabwean media academic, Wallace Chuma, jumped into a time machine and did the detective work. An abridged version of his retrospective baseline study appears in the appendices of this report.

Against this backdrop, two changes stood out: the constitutional reform, and the general diversification and expansion of an otherwise moribund media market. The partners' accounts of these changes, and their involvement in the processes that lead to them are told in the second half of Part 1. The partners' three audio-visual narratives of these most significant change stories have been edited together into one short video that can be viewed at http://youtu.be/aciWDSrXkss

While these changes were the result of an array of complex factors, many beyond the control and influence of the ZMP, the study found that the programme certainly facilitated and oiled the change processes (see Part 2). Not least by enabling the programme's partners to be in the right place at the right time, ready to act when the much-maligned government of national unity provided a long-awaited window of opportunity.

With support from the programme, the ZMP's partners seized the opportunity and, with a groundswell of public opinion behind them, galvanised the decision makers. The full significance of this moment seemed only to really dawn on the programme's partners when, together, they compiled and shared their stories. For only then, perhaps, did they have the chance to reflect back on what had happened and to see how far they had come together.

In spite of the changes, the struggle may have, in fact, only just begun. The gains identified by the ZMP partners remain vulnerable to politicians who, rather than loosening their control of the media, may actually be controlling change for their own ends.

This was born out as the partners identified priorities for the ZMP in the coming years. The consensus and unity evident from this study was already beginning to fray as partners' new and potentially conflicting priorities came to the fore.

The ZMP's partners can look back with justifiable pride at the significant changes they have helped to bring about. Before focusing on what now has to be done to protect and build on their hard-won gains in what remains a hotly contested and volatile media space.

International Media Support (IMS)
February 2015

PART I
THE CHANGE

A Zimbabwean takes time to read a copy of the draft Constitution on the outskirts of Harare in March 2013.
Photo: AP Photo/Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi

Constitutional reform in Zimbabwe

In just a few years, Zimbabwe has developed a sprawling media landscape with a dozen private dailies and weeklies, more cell phones than people and an Internet penetration rate that is to the envy of its neighbouring countries.[1] Underpinning this new landscape of greater media pluralism and diversity is a new constitution, approved by the citizens of Zimbabwe in March 2013.

The new charter is a profoundly important step forward from the old one in terms of how it guarantees journalists' and citizens' right to access information, the protection of journalists' sources, the independence of media houses from the State, and a range of other fundamental issues. It is easy to overstate the significance of what a progressive constitution might herald in a country where a regime has systematically abused and ignored the right to freedom of expression and other human rights for over three decades. But in the case of Zimbabwe, the new charter is indeed an improvement over the previous one, said international human rights groups.[2] Back when it was approved, one legal think tank said it might even come to represent a "new era" for the country's media.[3]

The new constitutional guarantees on media freedom are the result of years of hard work by those media institutions and civil society organisations who seek freedom and democratic reform in the country. But in January 2015, nearly two years after it was approved, many of the new provisions had not yet been implemented.[4] Constitutions, of course, are only worth something if they are actually put to use and implemented through law, and in that sense, the work to reform Zimbabwe's media and the legal environment that surrounds it has barely reached half time.

"It's still pretty much business as usual because most laws have yet to be aligned to the constitution," said Settlement Chikwinya from the opposition party MDC-T, former Chairperson of the parliament's portfolio committee on media and information, and member of COPAC, the committee that drafted the constitution.

One of the laws Chikwinya is referring to is the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (AIPPA), which the freedom of expression advocacy group ARTICLE 19 in 2004 described as "the leading weapon of the government and the ruling Zanu-PF party in their ongoing campaign to stifle independent media".[5]

"We're working hard on getting the government to repeal AIPPA and other laws that quell the journalist community so we don't slide backwards," said Nhlanhla Ngwenya, Director of the press freedom group Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA)—Zimbabwe, one of over a dozen civil society and media organisations that lobbied for media freedom guarantees to be included in the constitution.

Previously fractured and fragmented, each of them vying for influence in a profoundly hostile political environment, these organisations came together to drive forward the changes to the constitution under national alliances like the Zimbabwe Association of Community Broadcasters (ZACRAS) and the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe (MAZ). There

is no doubt that the lobby work carried out by the members of MAZ, ZACRAS and other similar groups have had a critical influence on what the new constitution looks like.

"We are now friends with these organisations, which were once labelled regime change agents by my party," said Bright Matonga of the Zanu PF party, referring to MAZ, MISA Zimbabwe, the Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe (VMCZ) and the Zimbabwe National Editors Forum (ZiNEF). Matonga used to serve as Deputy Information Minister and also sat on the committee that drafted the constitution. "They carried out focused, constructive lobbying, which made us listen. Their presentations helped sway our positions as political parties and made it possible for us to come up with detailed clauses on the media to ensure its freedom."

"Media rights issues were literally carved into the constitution by organisations like MAZ, MISA Zimbabwe and VMCZ," said Settlement Chikwinya. "It is because of the material received from them that the constitution responds to the needs of the general public."

But despite the successful work of the media and civil society groups over the past couple of years, the final push for implementation of the constitution and the further reform of the media sector is proving quite a challenge.

"The government has given us so much to chew over with the new constitution. What should we prioritise next? Legislation? Regulation? Professional standards and ethics? The sustainability of media houses? The list goes on and on," said Charlton Tsodzo, a Zimbabwean media researcher. "The consensus is no longer there within the media community. There is simply so much to do, so people can't find common ground on what to push for next."

'Patriots' v 'sell-outs'

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Zimbabwe plunged head-first into one of the most severe political and economic crises it had ever seen. A failing economy with record-breaking hyper-inflation, extreme levels of unemployment of up to around 90 per cent, mass shortages of basic commodities, an increasingly authoritarian State, polarised public and political spheres, and a flight of hundreds of thousands into neighbouring countries to seek better opportunities.

For the media, the crisis was the culmination to a long-running escalation of threats against its very existence. The disastrous state of the economy meant that operating a private media outlet as a business became pretty much impossible while a set of laws were introduced and employed to stifle critical and oppositional voices.[6]

The first law was the 2001 *Broadcasting Services Act*.[7] In official terms, the Act established the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe as the responsible body to license new players in the broadcasting field. What the Act actually did was to entrench the position of the state-controlled Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) as the sole broadcaster in the country by making it nearly impossible for any independent broadcaster to be licensed. In 2002 came the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (AIPPA).[8] Despite its name, AIPPA does virtually nothing to secure access to information or protect privacy. Instead, it requires all journalists and media houses to register with a statutory media commission, and has also served as the basis for closing down the *Daily News* and *Tribune* newspapers in 2003 and 2005 respectively.[9]

In addition, government officials publicly berated independent journalists, labelling them traitors, mercenaries, and even terrorists bent on 'regime change'. In March 2004, for example, Minister of Information, Professor Jonathan Moyo, told the state-controlled *Herald* newspaper: "Mercenaries of any kind, whether carrying the sword or the pen, must and will be exposed and they will suffer the full consequences of the law."[10] On the more violent side of things was the 2001 bombing of the printing presses of the *Daily News* and the bombing of the offices of the community radio station Radio Voice of the People a year later. No one was prosecuted for the attacks.

Between 2000 and 2005, almost 100 cases of harassment, arrest and torture of journalists were reported by the Media Institute of Southern Africa. By 2005, the practice of journalism was only realistically available to those who towed the State's official version of the crisis unfolding in the country. For everyone else, independent, critical journalism had become virtually impossible to practice inside Zimbabwe, and many journalists were forced to relocate to neighbouring countries.

This made for a media landscape with exiled media outlets like Radio Voice of the People broadcasting from South Africa, but which was otherwise almost completely dominated by the state-controlled groups, the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation and the Zimpapers publishing house. Both were deployed to contain and delegitimise dissent and opposition by consistently promoting a bizarre rendition of the crisis, which characterised it as a 'war' between a 'patriotic' government and a host of 'sell-outs' in civil society, the opposition and the privately owned media.[11]

For their part, the exiled media and the little available privately owned media inside the country, NGOs and the political opposition contested the line peddled by the State. Through numerous local, regional and global fora they presented an alternative version of the crisis focusing on State repression and violence, curtailed freedoms and human

rights, manipulation of election results to favour the incumbent President Mugabe, and corruption and mismanagement of the economy.[12]

Much like reporting war, reporting a polarised society in crisis can be challenging when it comes to ethics and professional standards. In Zimbabwe's case, facts and evidence that did not conform to what was thought an acceptable editorial frame were often ignored because they stood in the way of the story. In the country's bifurcated media environment, which on the one side featured 'oppositional' and on the other 'patriotic' forms of journalism, many nuances of the crisis were lost.[13]

Many journalists working for the independent media adopted a counteroffensive editorial position when it came to reporting on the State, and extensively reported on the failings of Zanu PF, including violence, corruption, and other vices. All of it was principally consistent with their role in a democracy. But their reporting on anything Zanu PF—perhaps because of the persecution these journalists endured at the hands of the State—was all negative and often sourced from familiar anti-Zanu PF circles. The state-controlled media did the same, parroting the official line ad nauseam.[14]

With limited resources, disparate agendas, and struggling with the litany of harsh laws, civil society groups, the media and the opposition were not always as successful as they had hoped to be. In a report from August 2005, the International Crisis Group said that Zimbabwe's civil society was "weak, split along ideological lines, poorly coordinated, seriously short of money, largely urban-based and partly co-opted by Zanu PF".[15]

Their mutual experiences of harassment drew the media and civil society to work more closely together. This included the establishment in 2003 of the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe (MAZ), an umbrella organisation working to coordinate the different civic groups and their struggle for freedom of expression, the media and human rights in the country. That same year, the Zimbabwe Association of Community Broadcasters (ZACRAS) was also set up. The formation of the two groups represented significant progress because it over time enabled civil society and the media to rally collectively around calls for reform and do away with their disparate and fractured agendas. As the next couple of years would show, the groups lobbying for reform became, in a fairly basic—but very significant—sense, stronger together. Under the umbrella of MAZ, organisations like the Zimbabwean Union of Journalists (ZUJ) and MISA-Zimbabwe, were better equipped to take on the task of pushing for reform of the media.

Things took a sharp turn for the worse in 2008 when elections in March hurled Zimbabwe into a violent culmination to the long-running political and economic crisis. In the months between the first election and a runoff election in June, militia groups controlled by Zanu PF and security forces launched a campaign of violence aimed at intimidating the opposition and everyone associated with it—including the private media.[16]

Morgan Tsvangirai, leader of the opposition party MDC-T, ultimately withdrew from the runoff election, declaring that it was no longer credible. This allowed Robert Mugabe to win unopposed. When the violence finally came to an end, hundreds of opposition supporters had been killed and thousands had been tortured.[17]

A window of opportunity

The events of 2008 and early 2009 were not only devastating and tragic, but also a massive setback for those hoping for fundamental change in the political leadership.

Nonetheless, they still became, in hindsight, a political turning point as well as a window of opportunity for the media and civil society.

Although Robert Mugabe remained in power as President, he and Zanu PF were compelled by regional pressure from the South Africa-led Southern African Development Community (SADC) to form a unity government with the two oppositional MDC parties in February 2009. Around the same time, the government abandoned the Zimbabwean dollar and allowed the use of foreign currencies, putting an end to the country's hyperinflation.[18] For the media, as well as for citizens, the new environment was a breath of fresh air.

The Global Political Agreement (GPA) between Zanu PF and the two MDC parties, which served as the founding document for the new Government of National Unity, set down media reform, including the opening up of airwaves and licensing of banned newspapers, as an urgent task of the new government. That was partly due to the work of civil society, according to Nhlanhla Ngwenya of MISA Zimbabwe.

"When the opportunity for the GPA arrived we took advantage of it and pushed through our demands through our allies in both political parties and regionally so that the negotiating parties of the GPA were forced to concede."

Zimbabweans read a newspaper in Harare, 12 September 2008, announcing the breakthrough Global Political Agreement. Photo: AP

Despite a multitude of problems, the new government with its inclusion of former oppositional politicians still proved a very important window of opportunity for the media and civil society. In addition to the call for media reform, the agreement signed between Zanu PF and the two MDC parties, also required that a new constitution be put in place before the next elections could take place. For the media groups under MAZ and others who were calling for reform of the media, the time had truly come to exert their influence after years of hard work.

"We visited every community in every part of the country, providing people with concrete examples of how reliable information on for instance health or education issues were fundamental to their own self-determination," said Nhlanhla Ngwenya.

"You would actually have ordinary Zimbabweans demanding that guarantees for their rights to freedom of expression and access to information were provided for in the new constitution. That's pretty remarkable in a country where many are struggling first and foremost to provide for their own families."

"The civil society organisations established a special relationship with parliament to lobby for their issues to be included in the constitution. They did a form of parallel lobbying by providing education to the general public who was then consulted by COPAC [the committee that drafted the constitution]," said Settlement Chikwinya (MDC-T).

"At first there was resistance towards the civil society organisations and they [the members of COPAC] didn't want to listen to their arguments. But as we went on, they realised they had no choice. The constitution had to be done and the concerns of the media had to be addressed," said Kindness Paradza, Member of Parliament for Zanu PF in the northern Makonde district, member of the committee that drafted the constitution and publisher of the *Tribune* newspaper, which was shut down in 2004. "All of them—whether it was ZUJ, MISA, the Editors Forum, or MAZ—were pushing for press freedom to be enshrined in the constitution. And they achieved that."

A woman is assisted to cast her vote during the March 2013 constitutional referendum in Harare, Photo: AP Photo/Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi

Influencing reform

The new constitution is in many ways a major leap forward compared to the previous one.[19] Not only does it provide for the rights to freedom of expression and access to information, it also stipulates that the government should stay out of the editorial lines

of the media, including the state-owned Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation. Many of the positive changes have been brought about by the members of the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe and other likeminded organisations, according to policy makers like Bright Matonga.

"MISA Zimbabwe and MAZ played a very critical role in constructive lobbying. They managed to get the views from the public and the media and presented them to us. The views that they collected made a huge impact on us and made us understand what the public wanted," said Bright Matonga (Zanu PF).

Prior to the constitutional reform process, MISA Zimbabwe's partners, including many of the country's community radios and the organisation African Community Publishing and Development Trust had spent years reaching out to communities to drum up support for human rights.

"There was so much pressure on us from our constituencies," said Kindness Paradza (Zanu PF). "People said, you are the ones who are in parliament, and we need you to ensure that media freedom is included in the constitution. The media has been so polarised, abused and harassed, so can you make sure that at least these changes are made?"

Zimbabwe's political landscape underwent significant changes between 2009, when the government of national unity was formed, and 2013 when the constitution was approved. This helped drive the pressure from constituencies forward, according to Charlton Tsodzo.

"Individuals who prior to the 2008 elections were active in civil society but who in 2009 had gotten into parliament and government were now picking up their agenda from a few years earlier and started pushing for reform from the inside. This gave civil society groups and the media actual political leverage through their allies in parliament and the government."

This also paved the way for, among other things, a shift in the political establishment's attitude towards the country's private media and in particular the unlicensed community radios which remain popular in large parts of the country due to their widespread availability over shortwave and satellite radio frequencies—something which the online and satellite-based radio Channel Zim benefited from when it was set up in spring 2013 to extend the reach of the local community radios.

"In my constituency in Makonde, people in the rural areas want information. They want to read newspapers. They want to have good programmes on the radio. They want community radio stations because they help people on developmental issues like farming, health and family issues. So we're now pushing to have community radio stations," said Kindness Paradza (Zanu PF).

One of the community radio stations that started to find common ground with parts of the political establishment was the popular, but still unlicensed and therefore technically illegal in the eyes of the government, Radio Voice of the People.

"When we approached the elections in 2013, we saw that Zanu PF officials wanted to come on our shows. They wouldn't have been caught dead doing that a few years earlier. To us, that was a huge success," said John Masuku, Executive Director of Radio Voice of the People, which had seen its offices bombed by unknown attackers a decade earlier.

The discrepancy between the shift in attitude towards for instance community radios and the government's inaction on legal reform illustrates a broader point: the political establishment is not a monolith. It is incongruous and filled with incompatible ideological standpoints, hidden agendas, and shifting allegiances. Even if some members of parliament acknowledge, for example, the value of community media, other politicians do not necessarily agree. All of it prolongs the process of reforming Zimbabwe's media space, which in turn plays into the hands of those who are reluctant to relinquish their power.

Divisions and allegiances

With the constitution in place in March 2013, the road was paved for holding new general and presidential elections, which saw President Mugabe re-elected and his Zanu PF party return to all seats in the cabinet. After the election, Zanu PF saw a surge in factional infighting over who would succeed Mugabe as the party's next leader and its candidate for the 2018 presidential election. In late 2014, Mugabe chose to re-appoint himself as the party's front-runner rather than allowing his party to take the nomination to a vote at its congress in December. At the same time, he fired his Vice President Joice Mujuru after accusing her of plotting to kill him. Mujuru, who is thought to represent one of Zanu PF's two factions and a contender for taking over Mugabe's presidential seat in 2018, was replaced with Minister of Justice, Emmerson Mnangagwa, the leader of the opposing faction.[20]

"The different factions of Zanu PF are using the media to portray their own agendas. Both the state-controlled and the private media are seen as part of the mouthpieces of the two camps," said Kindness Paradza (Zanu PF). "The editors of the state-controlled media are supporting one faction which in my view is not proper. They should just balance issues," said Paradza, referring to the pro-Mnangagwa tendencies of some state-controlled media outlets.[21]

But the jostling for power in Zanu PF is also affecting the media in more profound ways. After the general and presidential elections in 2013, Minister of Information, Jonathan Moyo, set up the Independent Media Panel of Inquiry (IMPI). The panel includes senior editors from both state-controlled and private media, advertising representatives, communications technology experts, and representatives from civil society and is tasked with coming up with a list of recommendations on how to reform the media sector.

"A forum like IMPI would have been unthinkable just a few years ago, and in many ways represents a much more open approach to dialogue from the government's side than most people could have imagined a few years ago," said Charlton Tsodzo.

"The fact that Jonathan Moyo set up IMPI, is an indication of how relations have changed between the government and the media and civil society. This kind of dialogue is important," said Bright Matonga (Zanu PF).

While the establishment of IMPI and Jonathan Moyo's generally reconciliatory attitude towards the media could be taken at face value as a genuine attempt at trying to improve media-state relations, critics say they are more likely to be symptoms of the factional divide in Zanu PF.[22]

"I don't think it's unfair to say that IMPI is a process of political entrenchment from the side of Moyo's Ministry of Information. They are seeking to win over civil society, the media, whatever non-state actors you can think of," said Charlton Tsodzo.

"When he [Jonathan Moyo] came back as Minister he was a changed man. He is now pro-media and has become a darling of both private and state media. Surprisingly enough, they now love Jonathan," said Kindness Paradza (Zanu PF).

It is not only IMPI that has attracted attention over the past year. A proposed—and long-awaited—opening up of the airwaves through a radio licensing scheme is being criticised by the media and civil society groups.[23] The Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe first promised to hand out licenses to private radio stations back in 2011. But much like the lacking implementation of the constitutional guarantees on media freedom the process of handing out radio licenses is happening at a near glacial pace. Critics say it illustrates the government's desire to control the process of reforming the media.[24]

A woman carrying a baby walks past campaign posters of President Robert Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai in Harare a week after the 31 July 2013 presidential election. Photo: AP Photo/ Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi

"There is still vast room for improvement in the media. The few licenses to print media that have been handed out does not transform into any significant media independence as a whole, especially when the government is still heavily involved in the outlets," said Settlement Chikwinya (MDC-T).

"Their tactic is to divide and rule," said Andy Moyse from the Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe. "It's not impossible that a few new licenses will go to radio stations that are actually independent. But the majority will undoubtedly go to companies or organisations who are either linked to the ruling party or who have close ties with ruling party officials."

Looking towards the 2018 elections, the tactic of dividing and ruling could make for an even more divided media sector. A media sector where some groups, even if they are not controlled by the State, are still largely sympathetic towards it instead of treating all political groups with equal amounts of scrutiny.

Sustaining change

While the jostle for influence and power in Zimbabwe may seem like a hindrance in the way of establishing a healthy media sector, the way the political landscape has evolved, and continues to evolve, also presents a window of opportunity for the country's civil society and media groups in their efforts to push forward the reform of the media and the legal environment that surrounds it, said Charlton Tsodzo.

"In each party there are individuals who are trying to build their own positions and there are individuals who are actual democrats who feel sympathetic towards civil society and the media. These are the people we need to work with."

If the constitutional guarantees on media freedom are to be able to actually guarantee anything, the media and civil society need to work with both kinds of individuals—actually sympathetic towards the media or not—through the same kind of concerted, focused efforts which were instrumental in bringing about the constitutional guarantees in the first place.

Whether they are trying to secure their own political survival in the scramble for future power, or are indeed genuine reformists who wish to see their country progress and its people flourish, does not matter much in the short run. What matters is that they can help bring about change that solidifies the gains the media and civil society have worked to bring about for more than a decade. Change that repeals past legislation so that private radios and TV stations are allowed to broadcast. Change that enables citizens and critical journalists to exercise their rights to freedom of expression and access to information. Change that encourages a healthy, vibrant, professional media community. Change that protects Zimbabwe from sliding backwards when the country's next president takes control.

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STORIES OF MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE

These stories about the work of the partners of the Zimbabwe Media Programme (ZMP) are told in the partners' own words and using their own images.

The stories are available as a combined audio-visual narrative on
http://youtu.be/aciWDSrXkss

Zimbabwe's community broadcasters: From attacked to acknowledged

Told by: Community Radio Harare, Radio Dialogue, Radio Kwelaz, Radio Voice of the People, Wezhira Community Radio, Zimbabwe Association of Community Radio Stations

From the early 2000s onwards, Zimbabwe's already beleaguered independent media came under increasingly heavy pressure as the country's crisis deepened. Draconian legislation was adopted to silence critical voices and journalists and civil society leaders were subjected to harassment and imprisonment.

It was nearly impossible for us to operate in the country and our most talented journalists fled quickly. They could no longer secure an income and they feared what might happen to them and their families if they stayed. For those who did stay behind, professional independent journalism was no longer an option. The little independent media left became rife with self-censorship.

Those of us who were forced into exile continued broadcasting back into the country via shortwave. Our reports about the devastating situation inside the country started putting the government and its broadcaster, the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) under pressure.

With some of our colleagues still in Zimbabwe, we were able to report on what was going on the ground. We took the reports they sent us and transmitted them back into the country. With our reports broadcast from outside, people became wise to the propaganda of the state-controlled media. What they saw on the news or heard on the radio didn't correspond at all to what they could see in their own communities, and lots of people stopped watching ZBC.

The popularity of our shortwave and satellite broadcasts soon led the Zimbabwean government to confiscate shortwave radios, with the police raiding peoples' homes to confiscate the receivers. But by this time, people had already become wise to their propaganda.

From 2002 onwards, we and our colleagues from groups like the Media Institute of Southern Africa Zimbabwe (MISA Zimbabwe) started mobilising communities. By holding community meetings we gave people a chance to voice their needs and demands. The demand for community media came from local communities themselves. People were fed up with getting so little news and information from their own local areas. Their stories were simply never heard. Our community outreach meetings gave people a chance to form an appreciation of how the media could look like—a media landscape that was responsive to their needs.

In 2007, we formed the national alliance, Zimbabwe Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (ZACRAS). ZACRAS and MISA Zimbabwe began to actively lobby the government to license community radios, which were, in the eyes of the government, broadcasting illegally. We were seen as subversive. As actors who wanted to overthrow the government. But our shows simply dealt with what people wanted; what the communities needed.

Top left: A community meeting organised by partners to the Zimbabwe Media Programme. Top right: In the studio at Radio Voice of the People. Photos: ZMP partners.

Our calls for community broadcasting were met with deafening silence by the government. But when Zanu PF was compelled to share its powers with the rivaling Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) after the contested 2008 election, a small opening started to emerge. After years of what seemed like futile efforts from our side, came the Global Political Agreement (GPA). Media freedom and the licensing of radio stations, which we had fought for so long, were now among the key issues up for discussion. It was a milestone for us as community broadcasters.

Even though no independent radios were actually given a license, it was clear that the government's attitude towards independent media and community broadcasters was starting to change. With the Government of National Unity between Zanu PF and the two MDC parties in place, we started seeing small, but unprecedented, positive changes in attitude from the Zanu PF headed Ministry of Media, Information and Publicity. What we saw was a kind of unofficial recognition.

As we started to find common ground with the government, we as community radios also started finding new ways to work together when Channel Zim was set up. Over the years, many Zimbabweans had acquired free-to-air satellite decoders to watch TV from South Africa. Channel Zim was set up as a satellite radio station to reach all these people. By broadcasting our community radio content on this new satellite radio channel, we were able to reach a much broader audience and amplify the voices of our communities.

Despite bumps in the road, such as the licensing of two Zanu PF linked radio stations, the Ministry of Information and the parliamentary committees that deal with the media have become much more responsive to us over time. Many members of parliament do not have the technical expertise around media issues, but they have the position to influence policy. We equip them with knowledge so they know what they're talking about in parliament and with the government. It gives them a chance to have an informed discussion.

The gradual shift in the government's attitude towards us was also seen and heard in our broadcasts. In the run-up to the 2013 presidential election and constitutional referendum, Zanu PF officials started turning to us for coverage. They wouldn't have been caught dead doing that a few years earlier.

"We know you guys are listened to by many people," they said. We had become acknowledged. To us, that was a huge success. Now, we're just waiting for our licenses.

The widening of Zimbabwe's media space: From repression to plurality

Told by: Africa Community Publishing and Development Trust, Humanitarian Information Facilitation Centre, Magamba, Media Centre Zimbabwe, Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe

From around 2000, the threats against Zimbabwe's civil society and media intensified alongside the country's political and economic crisis, which brought with it record-breaking inflation, extreme levels of unemployment and an increasingly authoritarian State.
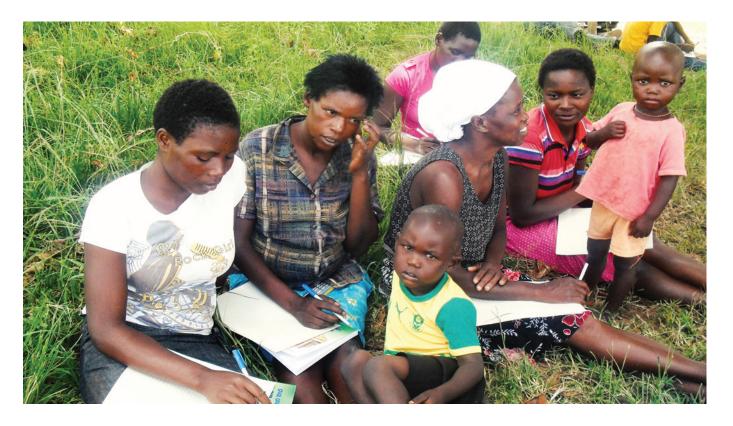
We saw our colleagues in the independent media labelled as traitors and terrorists, facing harassment, imprisonment and even torture. By 2005, for professional, independent journalism had become nearly impossible to practice and self-censorship and hate speech were widespread.

Only media willing to tow the government's version of the country's crisis were able to exist, which left a media scene heavily dominated by the state-controlled Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) and Zimpapers. With mobile phones and internet access prohibitively expensive, people's knowledge of the situation was largely confined to what they could get from the state-controlled media.

After several years of very limited access to information outside the government's official narrative, came the Global Political Agreement (GPA) in 2008, which came to represent a critical moment for us media organisations.

With the GPA and the Government of National Unity came the constitutional reform process, which was our window of opportunity to influence the political and legal environment and we began to seriously join forces as media organisations.

A community workshop on the constitution organised by the Africa Community Publishing and Development Trust (ACPD). Photo: ACPD

Indicating a conciliatory attitude, the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Media, Information and Publicity, started discussing how to reform the media with us and our colleagues from across civil society.

Their change in attitude enabled us to take a coordinated approach. With the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe, we moved away from fragmented efforts, and started lobbying the government with a unified voice, and by reaching out to local communities across Zimbabwe, we made sure people's needs and demands for the new constitution were heard.

Through our joint submissions on media freedom to COPAC, the Constitutional Parliamentary Committee, we managed to influence how freedom of expression and access to information are guaranteed in the constitution.

Around the time when the Government of National Unity was formed in 2009, people started seeing an increase in media products and affordable technology, which marked a turning point for the expansion of people's access to alternative sources of information.

The prices of mobile phones and SIM cards plummeted and fiber optic cabling was introduced across the country. The internet became relatively fast, cheap and accessible. At the same time, several newspapers, including Newsday and Daily News, were granted licenses. Two new commercial radio stations, ZiFM and StarFM, were also licensed. Although they were both owned by Zanu PF linked individuals, it was clear that the media scene as a whole was undergoing profound changes.

People in even the most remote areas could now listen to the radio on their phones and read newspapers online, and were no longer forced to rely on state-controlled news and information.

Newfound access to platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp means people can now express themselves much more freely than they ever could. People can finally transcend the boundaries of information which used to constrain their lives.

Participants in a World Press Freedom Day event organised by the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe (MAZ) and its members. Photo: MAZ

The plurality of media we have today is a marked improvement over just a few years ago. But we still have a long way to go before we are truly free.

Media freedom in Zimbabwe: From guaranteed repression to rights guaranteed

Told by: Federation of African Media Women Zimbabwe, Media Alliance of Zimbabwe, Media Institute of Southern Africa Zimbabwe, Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe, Zimbabe National Editors Forum, Zimbabwe Union of Journalists

Zimbabwe's severe economic and political crisis in the early 2000s went hand in hand with increasing repression of the country's media and civil society. We started seeing the military interfere in our day-to-day lives. Our colleagues in the media were harassed, arrested and tortured. New laws such as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Broadcasting Services Act, were enacted to quell the voices of our colleagues. Capital Radio was raided, and Radio Voice of the People and Daily News were bombed. We were living in total chaos.

As the country's crisis deepened, hundreds of thousands of people fled to escape oppression and to secure their livelihoods elsewhere. Professional, independent journalism became nearly impossible to practice. By 2002, the intensive oppression of civil society and our colleagues in the media prompted us to increase our advocacy for a media reform. But three years on, our calls for change were still falling on deaf ears. By 2005, it was clear that we needed to ramp up the coordination of our advocacy work. With the establishment of the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe we went from advocating for change in a fragmented way to issuing joint statements and fortifying our work through a unified voice.

The heavily contested elections of March 2008 led to a campaign of intensive violence and intimidation against civil society, the media, and anyone perceived to be opposition supporters. Following international and regional condemnation and pressure, Zanu PF and MDC negotiated the Global Political Agreement which led to the power sharing Government of National Unity in February 2009. As part of the GPA, the new government was tasked with drafting a new constitution, and that came to be a watershed moment for us as media advocacy groups.

By the time COPAC, the parliamentary committee tasked with drafting the new constitution, was set up, our unified position on media reform was starting to catch on. By giving citizens concrete examples of how reliable information on for instance health or education issues were fundamental to their own self-determination, we managed to mobilise civil society and the broader population around access to information—a key part of a what we were fighting for. Years of raising awareness through public meetings and information materials about the importance of access to information was now beginning to pay off. Once COPAC began drafting the constitution, freedom of expression and access to information had become unequivocal demands from a majority of the provinces in the country.

In addition to mobilising communities to start demanding their rights, we were also meeting directly with influential people from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU) to push them to put regional pressure on the government. We also met face to face with influential members of parliament and submitted policy documents to the committee drafting the constitution to provide them with inspiration. All of these efforts mean we now have a constitution that guarantees media freedom and independence, freedom of expression and access to information.

We now have our rights guaranteed on paper. It's time we fight for them to be enforced.

PART II
THE CONTRIBUTION

Residents of Mbare line up to cast their vote in Zimbabwe's 2008 run-off election at a polling station in Harare, 27 June 2008. Photo: AP Photo/Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi

The contribution of the Zimbabwe Media Programme

This section of the report looks at how the Zimbabwe Media Programme (ZMP) has contributed to the change processes that the partners' stories have talked about in the previous section. It is important to underline that bringing about change is rarely the work of any one organisation or programme. Change—positive or negative—is usually the result of a complex combination of factors, including the contribution of many people and many things. In this instance, it has been our aim to see what contribution the Zimbabwe Media Programme has made to the changes that the Zimbabwean media sector and civil society have worked to bring about.

It was a factor far beyond the control and, in many respects, the influence of the ZMP that finally created the opportunity for many of the changes that the partners to the ZMP talk about to take place. Without the Global Political Agreement (GPA) and the Government of National Unity, the changes may never have happened. Zimbabwe's power-sharing government in 2009 spurred decision makers to be more responsive to the issues the partners had been pushing for in over a decade. To seize this opportunity, the partners needed to be prepared and the early work of the ZMP, and the work of some partners long before it was established meant that the partners were ready to act when the opportunity arose.

The changes highlighted by the partners in their stories in the previous section, as well as in their presentations of those stories during group discussions, refer to a number of initiatives supported by the ZMP. These initiatives include amongst others:

• Collaboration between partners through organisations like the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe;
• The drafting of alternative laws and policies;
• The lobbying of the parliamentary committee that deals with the media;
• Meetings with members of the committee which drafted the constitution;
• Community outreach through radio broadcasts and community meetings to inform and educate citizens on issues related to freedom of expression and access to information;
• Media coverage by alternative and exiled media outlets.

It was not just the programme's support to these kinds of initiatives that enabled the ZMP to contribute to the changes. It was also the nature of the support—the programme's approach—which contributed to bringing about the changes. The focus group discussions with partners and programme staff revealed important lessons that the programme can learn from—including both positive and constructive examples that document how the approach of the ZMP has succeeded and in a couple of instances, how it can be improved. The support provided by ZMP as discussed by the partner groups can, largely speaking, be categorised into two areas that we will deal with in depth below:

• Enhanced strategic focus and improved collaboration;
• A culture of openness and pragmatism.

Enhanced strategic focus and improved collaboration

Zimbabwe's media and civil society had been facing suppression and harsh resistance to reform for decades when the Zimbabwe Media Programme began in 2005. This had put them in a rather disparate and fragmented state with little strategic direction or funding to go with it. The Zimbabwe Media Strategy (ZMS), first drafted in 2005, was an attempt to provide that strategic direction. Hand in hand with the establishment of the Zimbabwe Media Strategy went the strengthening of the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe (MAZ) which was established on Zimbabwean organisations' own initiative in 2003. MAZ now functions as an umbrella organisation that provides a platform for partners to share information, coordinate their work and ensure that the formulation of joint positions and policies takes place.

The Zimbabwe Media Strategy

Part of the reason why the Zimbabwe Media Strategy has been successful is that it enables partners to fit their individual strategic thinking and objectives into a larger framework that provides more cohesive, integrated considerations and strategies about the development of the media sector as a whole. That provides a sense of direction because partners are able to align their own strategic thinking with the overall objectives for the sector they are part of. On a more practical level, the ZMS also provides partners with opportunities for building synergetic relations with other organisations involved in the Strategy.

"The Strategy is the most cohesive and clear programme that we are a part of. In terms of, on the one hand the overall objectives that everyone within the programme is trying to contribute to, and the different focus areas with the more specific objectives. It is helpful to us as an organisation to be able to see which strategic kind of synergies we can build with other organisations." — ZMP partner

In what were previously very divided media and civil society sectors, a common document that outlines the priorities for the media sector as a whole is surely a breath of fresh air, but it has also come with some difficulties: a lack of ownership of the Strategy from some media and civil society partners and a lack of buy-in from some donors. The two appear to be partly interrelated. The lacking ownership of the Strategy from some partners seems to stem partly from a sense that the document was more the result of an IMS imposition than a process which the partners themselves were in control of. This sentiment seems no longer to be widespread, with another partner describing the process of revising the Strategy as a collective one:

"I remember workshops during the annual media stakeholders' conference where we updated the objectives collectively. So I think to my mind it's always been a very consultative exercise. I've never felt either the programme document or the media stakeholders is an IMS imposition." — ZMP partner

More relevant to the practical work of partners, is how some of them fail to take ownership of the Strategy because they find that its focus areas and the calls for proposals from some donors are not strategically or thematically aligned. This means that partners from time to time are unable to use the strategic framework of the ZMS to develop their proposals, which impacts their fundraising work and planning efforts.

"Fundraising is a matter of survival and because not all donors stick to the core areas of the Strategy, you have to think outside of it sometimes. If IMS is going to contribute maybe USD 40,000 against your annual budget of USD 300,000, you can't sit there and say 'no I'm loyal to the Strategy', if someone else has a call for proposals that isn't in line with it. That's where the challenge is. The trouble is that some donors are not buying into it. Yes, they are aware of it, but their funding is also modelled along their own priorities in Zimbabwe." — ZMP partner

Not directly related to the Strategy, but still relevant in this context, is a perceived lack of transparency around what the funding priorities of both the ZMP and some donors are. This can have an impact on the fundraising and planning of activities of partners.

"We don't know what strategic directions donors are coming up with. They don't tell us, and it makes it difficult to align our proposals with their priorities." — ZMP partner

"We wrote a proposal, which passed the [donor's] shortlisting, but then we didn't make it, because although they said our proposal was good, the direction the donor said they were now taking is one of gender mainstreaming. We had no way of knowing that." — ZMP partner

Despite the identified issues around ownership of and buy-in to the Strategy, there is little doubt that it has contributed valuably to the work of the media and civil society partners of the ZMP. This contribution includes, for example, enabling partners to focus their efforts on the issue of media reform when the window of opportunity for including it as part of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) in 2008, and subsequently as lobbying efforts gained pace around the actual drafting of the new constitution.

A pedestrian passes an election poster and newspaper banner headline in Bulawayo, 1 April 2008. Photo: AP Photo/Mujahid Safodien

The Media Alliance of Zimbabwe

Established on the initiative of partners in 2003, the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe has been a critical element in the partners' work in relation to the constitutional reform process — both before the process started openly when it came to negotiations in SADC to include media reform as part of the Global Political Agreement (GPA), and after the process of drafting the constitution was initiated. This is expressed by partners and clearly corroborated by policy makers interviewed for section one in this report.

In practical terms, much of what MAZ did was to coordinate and formulate the positions of its members so that they were speaking to and influencing policy makers with one unified voice, rather than on the basis of disparate disjointed agendas.

"In the past, organisations were just doing and saying what they wanted. But now, if MAZ wants to come up with a position on anything, the media groups meet and come up with one common position. That is the most critical thing MAZ does and it really helps in terms of effective lobbying." — ZMP partner

"Whenever there's an issue, MAZ will come up with a common position for all of us. For example, when the new Minister of Information was appointed, he called for a meeting with all stakeholders. He said he wanted each and everyone to speak. But MAZ stood up and said 'look, such and such is our position'. It helps a lot to be on point like that." — ZMP partner

A critical part of what lobbying has been about for MAZ and its members, as some of them express in their individual stories of most significant change in Part 1, is about educating and informing policy makers about the technical aspects of for example regulation and legal rights.

"After MAZ members went to the Kariba meeting [in 2009] with the parliamentary portfolio committee on media, the Chairperson of that committee spoke exactly like MAZ a few days later on World Press Freedom Day. We couldn't believe someone from parliament was actually expressing MAZ's agenda." — ZMP partner

A different angle to describing the laudable features of MAZ comes from a staff member of the ZMP who underlines the 'think-thank' qualities of the organisation—a function widely appreciated by partner organisations that do not have the capacity to research and formulate policy positions themselves.

"One of the key roles that MAZ has been playing without stepping on anyone's toes is actually a think-tank role. Thinking on behalf of the partners because they are busy with their day-to-day struggles. So MAZ comes in to say 'ok, there is this issue that has come up, how should it be tackled?'" — ZMP staff

A culture of openness and pragmatism

Alongside the support that the ZMP provided to the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Media Strategy, as well as the programme's many other areas that are meant to contribute towards the programme's overall outcomes and objectives, there are certain characteristics that have more to do with the nature of the support. They are the defining traits, practices and strategic decisions that enable the programme to contribute to the successful work of partners.

Openness and promoting the work of partners

The locally based team of the Zimbabwe Media Programme is of great value to many, if not all, partners. The open approach to, for example, holding brainstorming sessions and providing input to concept notes combined with in-depth knowledge of both the media and political context as well as the priorities of ZMP are highly valued by partners.

"We really discuss with [Zimbabwe based ZMP staff member]. We really sit down and look at what is practically possible in what we propose to do in our proposals. And even the budgets we actually discuss and they tell us what is possible." — ZMP partner

"Working with [Zimbabwe based ZMP staff member] who's got a lot of experience is great. Meetings are always constructive in the sense that if they are confident that the project is on track, they will suggest new things. They will say 'did you think about the young people you are working with? Why don't they produce a newsletter?' 'Oh yeah, that's something that's measurable and real.' That constructive input is always helpful." — ZMP partner

This type of support directly from the locally based team is combined by the ZMP's ability to promote synergies and relationships between different partners in Zimbabwe because the programme's staff has in-depth knowledge of the competencies of other partners and effectively promotes the complementarity that can be achieved when bringing them together. Leveraging the work of partners by exposing them to methods and ideas employed in other countries in which IMS works, as well as exposure to donors and other international organisations are also critical aspects of the support.

"Practically speaking, the media programme increased our funding. Not just by IMS funding us directly, but because they made our work more visible by presenting it to other agencies. That kind of leveraging is very helpful. What they will also do is share with us what they've seen in other countries. And that helps us also broaden our horizons." — ZMP partner

The open approach to engaging with partners when they require assistance on, for example developing project proposals, seems to characterise the programme more fundamentally, reflecting a consultative culture and a flexibility in how the programme conceptualises itself according to what is expressed by partners as needs on the ground.

"When we first met IMS they didn't understand community publishing at all, which was typical of organisations that supported media at the time. We had to really educate IMS that there are many ways of doing media. Once they understood this, the concept of what media could be in Zimbabwe, they shared that with other agencies. That meant media support as a concept became much broader than just the traditional newspapers and radio." — ZMP partner

One partner, referring to the difficulties in securing funding during Zimbabwe's 2008-2009 political, economic and humanitarian crisis, lauds the programme for its willingness and ability to support risky, innovative ideas that arose in response to the developments in the country at the time—developments that needed new kinds of responses.

"IMS' programme is about solidarity when you're taking risks. They are supporting very risky, innovative ventures. I think that's worth more than money—when people stand behind you when you're doing something new. I think that kind of support is hugely necessary when you're going to some of these difficult areas." — ZMP partner

The pragmatism of institutional support

As part of the Zimbabwe Media Programme, some partners are provided with institutional support in various forms. Given that projects and activities are unlikely to succeed if they are implemented by a weak partner, providing institutional support seems like the most pragmatic and straightforward approach. But as many of partners are also keenly aware, rent, electricity, management courses and salaries are not the most attractive kinds of expenses for anyone to cover. But they are, nonetheless, critically important.

"One other really important thing, which very few agencies do, is that the [Zimbabwe] Media Programme supports organisational development—not just projects. Many agencies only want exciting projects, and don't pay attention to the organisational base however stretched it is. The organisational development support we've gotten has been very, very, very helpful." — ZMP partner

"The attitude that you have towards programme support must be the same attitude you have towards institutional support. I'm talking about administration and the salaries of key staff. It's very critical because if you take those for granted you will have a serious problem." — ZMP partner

A man reads a copy of the state owned daily newspaper, 'The Herald' a day after President Robert Mugabe is sworn in as president in June 2008. Photo: AP Photo/ Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi

Part of the problem with providing institutional support that can cover expenses like rent and salaries in addition to support to concrete activities, is that there are very few exciting causal results to show for that money. That is an issue for the Zimbabwe Media Programme, for IMS, for donors, and for the development sector in general. Several of the partners express their general concern over how to illustrate the impact their work is having.

 "Part of the work that we do is to hold consultative stakeholder meetings. People will discuss and make recommendations for policy and whatnot. It's not easy for you to then expect results in the next six months. Or even in the next year. And when you get those results you wonder if you can attribute them to that particular meeting you did."
— ZMP partner

"If you're funding something for six months, we should be able to then know what kind of results you can expect, as opposed to results you can expect in a four-year project."
— ZMP partner

The concerns of the partners illustrate a broader point: any reasonably complex change; social, political or economic, or a combination thereof, is likely to take a very long time to bring about. That is not limited to Zimbabwe where the political climate has been hostile to furthering media reform or developing democratic institutions. Because it takes time, those who work to bring it about also need to calibrate their expectations with regards to how quickly and in what form results will materialise. And when results finally do spring up, it becomes a question of how to assess the extent to which they follow from the work everyone has done.

The characteristics of the Zimbabwe Media Programme as expressed by partners above, appear convincingly to have contributed to the success of these partners in helping bring about the changes discussed in section one of this report. In Zimbabwe, where the situation has been extremely volatile for the past many years, taking an open and pragmatic approach to the many diverse needs that have arisen over time seems to have been key to ensuring that the programme maintained its relevance by supporting partners when they most needed it with types of support they truly benefitted from.

Conclusion

The partners to the Zimbabwe Media Programme have worked to bring about democratic reform of their country's media sector for many years. Some have been in it for over a decade and others are relative newcomers. While many partners at the outset of the programme suffered from the impact of years of repression and lack of resources, which resulted in underfunded projects and disparate agendas, the fact that ZMP made it possible for them to come together through groups like the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe and under the objectives of the Zimbabwe Media Strategy meant that they could take advantage of the window of opportunity that opened when the Government of National Unity was set up.

With the support of the Zimbabwe Media Programme they coordinated their work, shared information, found common foothold on policy positions and began lobbying for reform of the media to be included in the Global Political Agreement (GPA) and later for provisions on freedom of expression, media freedom and access to information in the constitution. With the assistance of ZMP, they had everything ready when the opportunity to exert their influence arrived. Better organised, better researched, better argued, they succeeded.

The contribution of the Zimbabwean Media Programme to their success in bringing about change was, and still is, defined by the programme's open and adaptable approach to development work. A strategic approach where innovation and creativity was needed to respond to the myriad of challenges and opportunities that the political environment in Zimbabwe hurled at the media and civil society between 2005 and 2014.

"It was a question of staying innovative. Post-election Zimbabwe [after 2008] once again presented a whole new set of circumstances. A reconfiguring of society. Of the opposition and of civil society itself. With that we needed to see new initiatives happening on the ground. And we needed to have the flexibility of funding organisations that realised it was time for new ideas and for innovative approaches." — ZMP partner

The Zimbabwe Media Programme and its contribution towards the reform of the media sector rely on an infinite amount of dynamics and circumstances; organisations and individuals; on the state of civil society after decades of repression; complex social, economic and political developments. It has all played a part in shaping the current state of Zimbabwe's media and the legal environment that surrounds it. There is no recipe for success readily available, but the ingredients of openness and pragmatism; the ability and willingness to support risky endeavours and innovation; flexibility both in funding and in programmatic scope; in-depth knowledge and expertise—all of it needs to be put to use once again as the media and civil society in Zimbabwe push forward with the implementation of the country's constitution and the further democratic reform of the media sector.

Appendices

Appendix A: Methodology

Background

In 2014, as the current phase of the Zimbabwe Media Programme was drawing to a close, we already had a good sense of how the programme had performed in relation to the kinds of improvements in the Zimbabwean media landscape we hoped would come about during this particular phase of the programme.

But, looking further back, those involved at the time felt the Zimbabwean media had undergone profound changes since 2005 when, at the nadir of Zimbabwe's political and economic "crisis", the seeds for the programme were sown at a meeting between representatives of Zimbabwe's independent media and some international media development organisations.

The programme started on a small scale with little funding, and gradually evolved into something more comprehensive. The focus and approach of the programme shifted between phases, as the needs and priorities of the media sector changed in response to the volatile environment they were operating in. From reports and other information gathered during the various programme phases, it was difficult to piece together an overall picture of the change processes that had occurred since 2005, and the extent to which the programme had contributed to these longer-term changes.

The aims of the study

Therefore we needed to take a step back and survey the preceding decade in a way that enabled the Zimbabwe Media Programme and its partners to identify what had been the main changes in the media landscape, and to determine what contribution, if any, the programme's media development efforts have made to these changes.

We wanted to tell this story primarily from the perspective of the partners who were in the thick of the changes taking place, in a way that was both accessible and useful to the programme and its partners: accessible in that we told the story using media, thereby playing to our strengths as media people; and useful in that partners and programme staff could, together, use insights and information from the story to plan the next phase of the programme based on what had and had not been achieved during previous phases.

In so doing, we also hoped to build a greater sense of common purpose among the programme's various actors whose focus is usually on their particular area of the programme.

The sample

A least one senior representative of each of the programme's 17 main partner organisations participated in the significant change story telling workshop outlined in 'Step 2' below. Members of the programme's staff also participated. The 28 participants – 22 men and six women – were divided according to their area of expertise and thus the

programme area their work focused on (see also 'Step 2' below). The programme's staff members participated together in one workshop.

The stories of change and of the contribution the programme had made towards these changes were told by those with first-hand experience of implementing and managing the programme and its activities. We decided not to involve beneficiaries of these activities partly for practical reasons: we did not have enough time nor money to bring together such a wide and diverse range of beneficiaries from around the country. And even if we had done, we also felt that, while these beneficiaries had valuable stories of change to tell, they did not know enough about the programme to tell us much about the programme's contribution towards these changes.

To balance the inevitable bias of the main participants, with their very specific and vested interests in the programme, we subsequently interviewed four key informants, three politicians (two from the government party Zanu PF and one from the opposition party MDC-T) who sat on the committee which drafted the constitution, and one media researcher. These informants had much less of a or, at least, a different vested interest, but they nevertheless knew enough about the programme to verify and add to the stories told by the workshop participants.

The method

The following steps were taken to address the objectives above, and to document the findings in a) this publication, and; b) multimedia learning materials for use by programme partners, staff and media development initiatives in other countries. This method adapted and combined the Most Significant Change monitoring and evaluation technique (http://mande.co.uk/special-issues/most-significant-change-msc/) with participatory media production and more conventional journalistic inquiry.

Step 1 – Retrospective baseline analysis

Before we could identify and measure changes in the main areas of work undertaken by the current phase of the Zimbabwe Media Programme, we first had to find out what the situation was in 2005, specifically with regards the indicators for the changes ("outcomes") envisaged in the current programme's results framework ("log frame").

This framework was a reflection of more recent thinking that had evolved in the light of experiences and practices of preceding phases of the programme. In 2005, the programme was far less clearly defined and, at the time, no baseline information was gathered for indicators that were only defined later in the programme.

Therefore, we had to go back in time and piece together from documentation and media reports evidence that showed what the situation was in 2005 vis-a-vis each of the outcome indicators in the programme's current log frame. Wallace Chuma, a senior lecturer at the University of Cape Town's Centre for Film and Media Studies, did the detective work and compiled a report that:

- Describes Zimbabwe's media landscape in 2005.
- Presents and assesses evidence of the situation in December 2005 with regards the Zimbabwe Media Programme's outcome indicators.

An abridged version of Chuma's report appears in Appendix B.

Step 2 – Significant change story telling workshop

Small groups of senior representatives of programme partners were asked to identify what, in their view, were the most significant changes – positive or negative – since 2005 in the areas of media development they are working in. Participants were grouped according to the programme's main areas of focus as follows:

- Group 1: Organisations involved in media law reform efforts (MAZ, ZINEF, MISA, MMPZ, ZUJ, FAMWZ)
- Group 2: Alternative media and organisations supporting alternative media (ZACRAS, CORAH, VOP, Radio Dialogue, WEZHIRA, KWELAZ, ACPD)
- Group 3: Organisations that build the capacity of journalists and media houses (the Media Centre, HIFC, MAGAMBA, VMCZ).
- Group 4: Programme staff members.

First, each participant wrote down what, individually, they felt was the most significant change to have occurred in their respective area. The participants then shared their individual stories of change with others in the group, and decided which story – or combination of stories – best represented the view of the group as a whole. Together as a group, the participants then told the story of how this most significant change came about. This they did using hand-drawn pictures, as if they were producing a storyboard for a video about the change process in question. Having compiled their storyboard, the group narrated and explained their story in more detail, prompted by questions from the workshop facilitator. The group's presentation and explanation of their storyboard was recorded. The criteria for "significant change" participants referred to when selecting their stories were as follows:

An example of change – positive or negative – that:
- Has affected the general public in some way;
- Is likely to have a lasting impact;
- Enables us to learn an important lesson / important lessons about our work.

Each group was given the chance to amend the criteria before accepting them as the criteria to use.

Following the group presentations, the participants then took part in a facilitated group discussion about the role of the Zimbabwe Media Programme in the change process described in the group's story. Again, this discussion was recorded.

Each workshop took about five hours.

Step 3 - Editing significant change stories

A journalist, who observed the workshops, produced a video of each group's significant change story. The video was based on each group's storyboard, as well as their subsequent narration and explanation of their story. As far as possible, the journalist produced the video using photographs and audio-visual material provided by the participants after the workshop. The journalist sourced additional audio and audio-visual material when necessary.

The journalist also strove to remain true to the participants' own words in the accompanying script for each video. A member of the group recorded the narration of the script, which was added the video. Members of each group were shown both the script and the video before it was finalised, and requested changes that better reflected their original story.

Step 4 – Feedback meeting

The workshop participants presented their edited videos to a meeting of their peers – a larger group comprising of members of all the groups that took part in the workshops, as well as colleagues from their respective organisations and other people involved in the Zimbabwe Media Programme. Participants in this larger meeting were asked to comment on and add to the stories told in the videos. The journalist who had produced the videos took note of the comments and additions.

The meeting was then presented with the main findings from the focus group discussions that explored the contribution the programme had made to the changes portrayed in the videos. After which, participants broke into groups and discussed what lessons could be drawn from the videos and focus group findings and, in light of these lessons, what the priorities for the next phase of the programme should be. Each group then reported back to plenary and their proposals were further discussed. Programme staff took notes of the participants' proposals and subsequent discussions. The meeting took about four hours.

Step 5 – Follow-up interviews and production of materials

The journalist conducted follow-up interviews with key informants with a view to further verifying and expanding on the significant change stories told during the earlier workshops. The journalist also gathered additional photos, video footage and other documentation.

The journalist then produced this report and the related learning materials using the groups' original significant change stories, as well as all the additional information sourced separately.

Step 6 – Strategic planning, fund raising and further learning

Meanwhile, programme staff embarked on a strategic planning process with partners to map out the next phase of the programme. This process took into account all the information gathered during the steps outlined above and, in so doing, sought to build on the strengths of and lessons learned from previous phases of the programme.

Once a plan for the next phase of the programme is finalised, the programme team intends to use the videos and other evidence from the study to support fund raising efforts. Meanwhile, the programme and its partners can use the videos and other materials to share with media development colleagues elsewhere the experiences of and lessons learned from the Zimbabwe Media Programme to date.

Appendix B: Baseline study

Executive summary

This report is a baseline study of the IMS Zimbabwe media programme context, focusing particularly on the socio-economic and political context against which the programme was launched in 2005. Through a predominantly qualitative analysis of a range of documentation from the IMS, its partners and other secondary literature, the report dissects the context in which the media in Zimbabwe operated in 2005, prior to the launch of the IMS programme. Further, the report articulates the changes that have taken place over the years in both the media landscape and the broader political economy of Zimbabwe.

The study makes several critical observations. The first is that the media in Zimbabwe in 2005 operated in a political, economic and professional environment, which was largely inimical to the practice of professional journalism. This included a plethora of restrictive laws, which both journalists and ordinary citizens had to contend with if they wanted to communicate narratives outside of the 'official' line, with harsh consequences for 'offenders'. The authoritarian state also had in its arsenal a raft of extra-legal instruments, including violence, to limit freedom of expression and the press.

The other critical point is that despite the existence of formidable odds to both the media and to freedom of expression in general, the media and civil society did not forfeit their agency. Thus there were initiatives taking place within the media and civil society, to coordinate combined strategies to defend freedom of expression and open up the mediated public sphere in the context of crisis in Zimbabwe.

The IMS Zimbabwe programme was launched within this context. It served as a critical intervention, which gave fresh impetus to ongoing—albeit perhaps rather isolated—efforts to bring together media and civil society actors in Zimbabwe to develop a common strategy and agenda to promote media freedom and freedom of expression so critical to the exercise of citizenship. Looking at the situation from the vantage point of 2014, it is clear that there have been changes to the media landscape of Zimbabwe, some of them quite important. At the same time, there have been significant continuities, such as the media laws, which media and civil society groups have been fighting for two decades, and it remains unclear whether the post-July 2013 Zanu PF is really committed to genuine media reform or pushing for cosmetic reform, as it did when it assumed power 34 years ago.

Introduction

In 2005, Zimbabwe was in the middle of a profound political and economic crisis that had started in earnest in 2000 although signs had begun showing as far back as the middle to late 1990s. There is a fairly substantial body of literature on the nature, causes and manifestations of the crisis, from academic literature to popular and artistic work, and, as would be expected, news media reports.

The crisis in Zimbabwe was both a lived and mediated experience. The physical

experiences that citizens across the country went through as they adapted to new realities had to contend for visibility with the mediated experiences that both the 'old' and 'new' media put out to the country and to the world, and in a heavily polarised environment, what constituted 'reality' was often up for debate. Faced with a situation the scope of which had not been seen since independence in 1980, the Zimbabwean media and civil society did not simply play victim and lose their agency. Both sides of the political divide—between Zimbabwe African national Union Patriotic Front (Zanu PF) and the state media and the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and its allies in civil society and the private media—were active players. In addition to its institutions of coercion—such as the army and the police—the state deployed both the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation and the majority state-owned media entity Zimpapers publications to the project of containing and delegitimising dissent and opposition.

It is against this background that the IMS launched its media programme on Zimbabwe in 2005. It was a context of crisis, and of competing interpretations and characterisations of that crisis, especially as the Zimbabwean case had become a regular subject at global fora such as the UN, the AU and SADC.

Methodology

This report, which is a baseline study, is based on a predominantly qualitative scrutiny of about two dozen documents from the IMS, its partners, and other secondary literature. The documents from IMS and its partners include strategy reports (and their reviews and updates), commissioned surveys, reports on workshops and other related meetings, among others. The approach was to identify the salient issues raised in the different documents, and reading them against the terms of reference made available prior to the commencement of the study. In analysing the documents, the writer sought to address the following issues:

1. To describe the context in which the IMS media programme was launched, and
2. To identify aspects of the Zimbabwean media landscape, which may have changed since 2005, and the possible indicators for such changes.

The nature of these key lines of inquiry lends itself methodologically towards a more qualitative approach. It is not impossible to engage quantitative elements in the study, especially if one is to try and to establish indicators of the extent of the changes that have taken place in the media landscape over a period of some seven years. However, for purposes of this report, the decision to remain within a predominantly qualitative framework was informed by the fact that the primary method, namely document analysis, would need to be complemented by other methods such as structured interviews and perhaps surveys if the quantitative element were to be reasonably applied.

A historical overview of the media in Zimbabwe

Before embarking on a detailed description of the media milieu in 2005, it is important to provide a contextual background of the political economy of the Zimbabwean media prior to 2005. This is important in the sense that it provides a perspective on both the continuities and changes in the media in the context of crisis.

In 1980, Zimbabwe gained its independence from Britain after a seven year armed liberation struggle and externally-mediated negotiations, which led to the hosting of democratic elections, which Zanu PF, led by Robert Mugabe, won. The transition to democracy in Zimbabwe was marked by some contradictions. On the one hand, the new political elites who assumed power on a strong mandate from the ordinary, formerly marginalised blacks spared no time to open up economic, social and political spaces and opportunities formerly denied to the black people. This was done through massive state interventions in deracialising the economy, labour, health, education, among others.

However, on the other hand, the interventions aimed at breaking with the past took place even as the new government simultaneously decided to maintain an array of legal and policy instruments inherited from the colonial state, instruments that in many instances in the not-too-distant past had been used to stifle human rights, including freedoms of assembly, of expression, and of the press. This was true of laws such as the Law and Order Maintenance Act, the Official Secrets Act, the Censorship and Entertainment Control Act, among a slew of others. The imperative for this approach was to establish and sustain the ruling party hegemony as soon as possible, while simultaneously containing any forms of dissent within the new post-colony, again as soon as possible.

The new government's media policy should therefore be viewed, perhaps unsurprisingly, as an attempt at constructing and maintaining the ruling party hegemony. With regard to the broadcasting sector—which at the time and even now remains Zimbabwe's and Africa's de facto mass medium—the state moved instantly to impose its imprimatur. Both staffing and editorial changes were made as soon as possible and almost overnight what used to be the Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation loyal to the racist Rhodesian Front became the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation loyal to Zanu PF. Comrades and activists who had run the nationalist propaganda exile radio station, Voice of Zimbabwe, from Mozambique were among the first to be deployed by the new government to run the ZBC.

With regard to the printed press, the state policy was slightly different. In 1981, the government, with a Nigerian grant, acquired majority shareholding for the country's biggest newspaper organisation, the Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Company—hitherto majority owned by South Africans—and renamed it Zimbabwe Newspapers Ltd, in short Zimpapers. Zimpapers, along with the news wire service the Zimbabwe Inter Africa News Agency (Ziana) and the Community Newspaper Group (CMG), were housed under a newly formed trust called the Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust (ZMMT), which the state argued would be a buffer between politicians and the media. At a time when wholesale nationalisation of mainstream newspapers was the fad in most parts of the continent, the new government's decision to have an independent trust rather than politicians run the affairs of the public press was hailed as a positive, if 'unique' experiment. In principle, the new government was communicating its commitment to a public print media, which was shielded from political pressures.

With regard to the privately owned press, state adopted a principle of "tactical indifference" (Chuma, 2007) within the first decade of independence. There was a very thin body of newspapers and magazine at the time, the biggest of which was the weekly Financial Gazette, the monthly Moto magazine, the entertainment

monthly Parade magazine and a few irregular titles. It could be argued that this industry was not significant enough to worry the new political elites. Even the Financial Gazette, the paper of choice for (predominantly white) captains of industry, was largely supportive of the new government, mostly thanks to the very market-friendly laws and policies, which the new government implemented in the economy, despite its rhetoric of Marxist-Leninism.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the government adopted the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) at the behest of the IMF and World Bank, opening up the economy and cutting down on a range of services citizens had enjoyed almost for free during the first decade of independence. The results were disastrous; several companies closed shop as it became unviable to compete with the flow of processed goods and products from outside the country, unemployment shot up, the gains made in education, health and other social services were reversed. The economy began its downward trajectory from this period. For the media, ironically, this period witnessed some remarkable, albeit brief, expansion. The opening up of the economy encouraged many local, black entrepreneurs to start up their own media ventures. The period between 1989 and 1996, for example, witnessed the launch of several privately owned newspapers including the Daily Gazette, the Sunday Gazette, the Zimbabwe Independent, Sunday Times, Horizon magazine among others. However, by the end of the 1990s, most of the new publications had folded because of viability problems.

For media-state relations at the time, two things must be observed. The first is that by the mid-1980s, it had become clear that 'independent' ZMMT trust was actually at the beck and call of the government, as the Ministry of Information enjoyed a free rein at Zimpapers, often firing editors who acted outside the party line. In 1989, the Zimpaper-owned Chronicle newspaper editor, Geoffrey Nyarota, was 'reassigned' after publishing a series of stories exposing top government officials' role in a car scandal, which came to be known in Zimbabwe as the 'Willowgate scandal'. In his part memoir, titled The politics of the Mass Media (1990), the late former Chief Executive of Zimpapers, Elias Rusike, provided several anecdotes of government interference in the affairs of Zimpapers. The next thing to observe is that even as the state kept its tight grip over Zimpapers and ZBC, it was also aware of the changing media ecologies in the region and globally, and was keen to be seen as supportive of reform.

In 1995, for example, the state gave its blessing to the formation of the Zimbabwe Media Council (ZMC), which comprised senior journalists and members of civil society. The council was chaired by a retired judge, and its role was to lobby for media law reform in the country. This was happening at a time when, across the continent, the discourses of democratisation, multi-partyism, liberalisation of the media, and so forth, had gained substantial currency in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union. During the same year, three cabinet ministers (Justice, Home Affairs and Information) who attended a conference on media law reform convened by the Willie Musarurwa Memorial Trust, told the delegates that the Zimbabwean government was keen on media law reform, and invited the ZMC to submit proposals to the government for the repeal or amendment of offensive laws.

However, two years later, as the economy took a tumble following the unbudgeted-for massive pay outs to war veterans, and the growing public unrest in its

wake, the state lost the appetite for media reform. The military intervention in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1998, the spontaneous food riots in Harare and Chitungwiza in January the same year, the launch of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), and the arrival of the Daily News on the media scene in the same year, all put the Zanu PF government in the spotlight. The 21st century therefore began on a fierce note of political contestation. Sensing an impending loss of political security, Zanu PF went to the offensive. As early as February 2000, for example, then Minister of Information, Chen Chimutengwende, complained in the Herald that the existing media environment in the country was "too relaxed" and that it had "allowed the penetration of media organisations with a political agenda to destroy the government and country" (Herald, 5/2/2000). He added: "We are not living in normal times...there is a fierce battle for the hearts and minds in Zimbabwe and we just have to win it" (Ibid). Although Chimutengwende himself did not make it into cabinet after the June 2000 elections, his successor, Professor Jonathan Moyo, did exactly what he had predicted. Subsequent state interventions in the media should therefore be considered against this backdrop of waning Zanu PF legitimacy and a formidable political competition.

Characterising the media landscape in 2005

As institutions of the public sphere, the media are embedded in most, if not all, sectors and structures of public life. In the context of Zimbabwe in 2005, the country's press had to contend with the crisis on at least two fronts; first as mediators of the unfolding events and second as businesses whose operations were being seriously impeded by this crisis. This section will discuss the media landscape in 2005 in terms of the following: the laws and policies governing the media, the professional and ethical conduct of Zimbabwean journalists and media houses, the state of collaboration between journalists and civil society, public access to diversity and pluralistic independent media, public access to community and other alternative media, and the state of collaboration between international media development agencies supporting the media in Zimbabwe.

[a] The legal and policy environment

As highlighted above, the onset of the crisis in Zimbabwe forced the government to abandon any plans for media reform it had—at least ostensibly—committed itself to during the mid-1990s. In a letter to the Willie Musarurwa Memorial Trust—who were a key player pushing for media reform—in August 1995, for example, then Director of Information Bornwell Chakaodza wrote:

We all know the problem as regards the laws that impinge upon press freedom and... what is needed now is to transform the process from complaints and promises into concrete action that will lead to the repeal/amendment of those laws (Chakaodza, 17/08/1995).

In September, a year later, then Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, Emmerson Mnangagwa, wrote to the newly appointed Minister of Information, Joyce Mujuru, requesting her to submit proposals for the amendments of the identified 'offensive' statutes to the Law Development Commission for legal drafting. Part of Mnangagwa's letter reads:

The principal piece of legislation dealing with press freedom and access to information is the Official Secrets Act [Chapter 11:09]. This Act was based originally on the British Act of 1911, and was subsequently amended in 1970 to deal with the situation in Rhodesia during UDI. The provisions of this Act as currently framed were intended to protect information regarding sanctions busting and to deter espionage and other such disclosures. This Act in our view is inappropriate to our present circumstances and constitutes a serious limitation on access to information. A further problem is that the current legislation dealing with this subject is fragmented...it would be desirable to introduce legislation that is comprehensive in nature and also appropriate to the changing times in which we live (E.D Mnangagwa, 27/09/1996).

All this was to change hardly two years later as a series of catastrophic political and economic decisions by the ruling elite resulted in heightened social unrest and the rise of formidable contenders for control of the state. In 1999, for example, Minister Mnangagwa told a group of journalists attending a law reform conference: "We dislike the Law and Order Maintenance Act, but sometimes it becomes handy" (Quoted in Saunders, 1999). By this time, any pretence that the government was committed to credible media reform had been lost.

By 2005, the talk of media reform was now largely confined to the private media and to civil society groups, who had not only to contend with the laws that existed in the 1990s, but also with a new, lethal legal arsenal added since then. The first was the Broadcasting Services Act (2001). This law was promulgated in response to a private radio station's successful Supreme Court challenge against ZBC's monopoly in 2000. Frustrated at not being licensed as a broadcaster, Capital Radio brought the matter to the Supreme Court, arguing that ZBC's monopoly of the airwaves was unconstitutional. When the court ruled in its favour, the station went on air immediately. However, the police raided the station's premises at night and confiscated all their equipment, effectively shutting the station down. This despite the fact that the High Court had cancelled the police search warrant. The Broadcasting Services Act was passed against the background of the state's determination to stifle the possibility of any independent or oppositional voices on the airwaves. This piece of legislation established a Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) as the responsible body to license any new player in the broadcasting field, and also made the controversial requirements of 75 percent local content for prospective broadcasters.

The other controversial piece of legislation was the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), passed in 2002. The law, among its many authoritarian provisions, requires all journalists and media houses to register with a statutory media commission. It is thanks to this law that some privately owned publications, including the highly popular Daily News and the Tribune were closed down in 2003. Even Zanu PF veteran lawyer and Parliament's Chair of the Legal Committee, the late Eddison Zvobgo, described the bill, before it was passed into AIPPA with hardly any changes, as "the most calculated and determined assault on our liberties guaranteed by the Constitution" (Zimbabwe Parliamentary Debates: Volume 28, No.46. January 29th, 2002). In the same year it passed AIPPA, the Zanu PF dominated Parliament passed the Public Order and Security Act (Posa), which turned out to be a more restrictive version of the Law and Order Maintenance Act. The new law introduced a raft of changes to the way citizens would behave

in public spaces, for example, the requirement to get police authorisation for any gatherings, big or small, and catalogued several 'offences' citizens and the media would be liable of committing, including publication of "false statements prejudicial to the State" (Section 15).

In addition to legal odds, the media in the country had to contend with extra-legal obstacles the state threw into their way. For example, between 2000 and 2005, almost 100 cases of harassment, arrest and torture of journalists were reported by the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA). Zimbabwe-based correspondents for major international media organisations such as the BBC, Guardian, Telegraph and several others were harshly deported, and in many instances in defiance of court orders. Local journalists working for major independent publications such as the Daily News, the Independent, the Standard, the Financial Gazette, the Zimbabwe Mirror and others were routinely arrested for one alleged transgression or another. In August 2001, for example, journalists from both the Daily News and the Mirror were arrested and charged with 'publication of false information' after they reported that police vehicles had been used to ferry goods looted from a farm ransacked by war veterans. In 2000, a Standard journalist, Chengetai Zvauya, was beaten up by a group of war veterans for being "unpatriotic" in his reporting. Journalists Geoffrey Nyarota, Lloyd Mudiwa, Vincent Kahiya, Dumisani Muleya, Constantine Chimakure, Luke Tamborinyoka and dozens of others were routinely arrested, harassed, detained and in some cases beaten up in cases that are well documented by MISA and other non-profit groups like the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX).

The Daily News printing press was bombed in 2001. Nobody was prosecuted. Journalists from the private press were routinely harassed even while they were on assignments, especially in rural areas, as the state had declared them enemies. Government officials often made publicly berated independent journalists, labelling them traitors, mercenaries, and even terrorists bent on 'regime change' in Zimbabwe. By constantly inciting violence against journalists in the independent press, the state justified violence against them.

By 2005, the practice of independent critical journalism was therefore in perilous legal straits. By constantly detaining, harassing, blacklisting and sometimes torturing journalists, the state and extra-state outfits, such as the major faction of war veterans, were sending out a clear message to the profession that media freedom only existed to those who towed the official explanatory version of the crisis unfolding in the country.

[b] The state of journalism and media ethics in the country

Journalism and media ethics are considered the legitimising factors in the relationship between the media and society. In many jurisdictions, the media enjoy a range of constitutional protections in part because of the general understanding that journalists will observe the profession's ethics when performing their important duties of informing, educating, entertaining and so forth. The key ethical principles of journalism include: truth-telling, accuracy, independence and accountability, minimising harm, fairness and balance in reporting. Objectivity, though often dismissed in critical scholarship in Media Studies as unattainable and irrelevant, is also a considered an important ideal in journalism practice.

During the period under review in Zimbabwe, the media operated in an environment in which ethics were occasionally subjected to severe tests. A study commissioned by the VMCZ on the state of media ethics in the country in 2013 revealed that there was a profound ethical deficit among journalists. The key findings included the prevalence of bribe-taking (brown envelop journalism) among journalists working in both the state and the private media, in part because of the generally poor salaries and working conditions in the profession; the degeneration of some journalists into political party activists while still posing as neutral harbingers of the 'truth'; the disregard for most of the traditional norms of ethical journalism because of absence of professional moral and thought leadership in the profession; the abuse of the Internet and other new media platforms for half-baked news-making, etc. Although the study focused on 2013, most of its findings are relevant to the situation in 2005. It would require reading between the lines in both the private media and the state media to have a semblance of what was going on in the country. The state was largely responsible for creating this situation in the media. For example, spokespeople of some state institutions such as the Police often refused to speak to journalists from the private media, resulting in cases where they went to print with insufficiently sourced and unbalanced stories.

[c] The state of collaboration between journalists and civil society
The outset of the crisis created conditions favourable for enhanced collaboration between journalists, especially those working for the independent media, and NGOs involved in media development in the country. It must be noted that organisations such as MISA, the Willie Musarurwa Memorial Trust, the Federation of African Media Women (FAMWZ), among others had been in collaboration with both journalists and government dating back to the early to mid-1990s, as they lobbied for media law reform. However, when the government made a volte face and ditched the reform agenda in the wake of the crisis, and started persecuting journalists and NGOs and branding them instruments of 'regime change', this naturally resulted in a forging of ties between the persecuted. Interventions from NGOs, both covert and overt, helped journalists and media houses weather some of the shocks resulting from both the crisis and the state's onslaught. For example, MISA's media defence fund helped provide legal assistance to dozens of journalists arrested by the state, often on spurious charges. Between 2002 and 2003, for example, the MISA fund had assisted close to 40 journalists from different media organisations. These include Daily News editor Geoffrey Nyarota and almost a dozen daily news staffers including photographers, Zimbabwe Independent journalists Dumisani Muleya, Iden Wetherrell, the UK Guardian correspondent Andrew Meldrum, Telegraph correspondent Peta Thornycroft, Financial Gazette editor Nqobile Nyathi, the late Standard editor Bornwell Chakaodza and reporter Farai Mutsaka and several other journalists.

When the Daily News ran into serious financial problems, shortly after its launch, funding from the Southern Africa Media Development Fund (SAMDEF) came in handy to avoid the closure of a newspaper that had become the most vibrant and critical 'opposition' newspaper in the country. At the height of the crisis, the prices of newsprint spiralled out of reach for most newspapers, especially the privately owned newspapers. Interventions from NGOs enabled these small players secure some newsprint.

At the height of the frenzied law-making, which resulted in AIPPA and other laws, civil society groups and the (mainly private) media staged a peaceful march outside Parliament to protest the law being debated, resulting in the riot police descending on them and arresting some journalists. The experiences of mutual harassment drew the media and civil society to work in closer cooperation. In its funding proposal for July 2004-July 2005, the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe notes the following, which gives a perspective on the state of collaboration between media and civil society in the country at the time:

Since (the constant arrests and harassment of journalists) the media associations, namely the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists, the Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe, MISA-Zimbabwe, the Independent Journalists Association of Zimbabwe (IJAZ) and other media NGOs in Zimbabwe have been meeting and exploring ways of further strengthening their internal cooperation in the country, particularly in relation to freedom of expression initiatives. This collaboration has been informal and many of the strategies employed by the different media organisations in an effort to address their concerns have been ad hoc and often only in reaction to the state's onslaught (p.13).

The Media Alliance of Zimbabwe (MAZ) itself was a direct product of the collaboration between journalists and civic society groups against the backdrop of increased state onslaught against media freedom and the urgency of creating a framework for more formal and coordinated cooperation. In October 2003, at a conference themed "Let the People Speak", ZUJ, MISA, IJAZ and MMPZ resolved to coordinate their advocacy efforts in their fight for freedom of expression, the media and human rights in the country. This saw the creation of MAZ as the body to effect that coordination of the different civic groups. The objectives of MAZ and the Zimbabwe Media Strategy, upon which MAZ was set, were the following:

1. To raise the priority accorded to freedom of expression and information issues and concerns in Zimbabwe in influential regional and international bodies (notably the Office of the Secretary General in the UN, SADC, African Commission and other bodies).
2. To increase the commitment and support of all countries and bodies with bilateral relations to Zimbabwe, including donors, to reforms in the media and information sector.
3. To enhance the collaboration of civic organisations within and outside Zimbabwe in developing and carrying out advocacy and public information initiatives.
4. To ensure the voices and views of victims of information rights abuses in Zimbabwe are heard and considered by policy and decision makers at national, regional and global levels.
5. To mobilise influential regional and international bodies to bring pressure to bear on the government of Zimbabwe to reform its human rights record, particularly freedom of expression and public information rights.

It is clear that the conditions created by the authoritarian state rendered it possible, if inevitable, that the victims of heavy handedness in the media and civil society combine their energies towards mutually agreed goals and objectives.

[d] Public Access to a diversity of independent mainstream as well as alternative media

It is clear from the foregoing discussion that access to the media, both mainstream and alternative was limited in the context of crisis. It was limited because of both political and economic reasons. The circulation of the major newspapers was restricted by costs of both printing and distribution. In the volatile rural areas, some independent newspapers such as the Daily News were 'banned' by local Zanu PF party supporters who accused the paper for negatively reporting on their party and government. Before its official ban in September 2003, the Daily News carried stories detailing how some civil servants such as school teachers working in Zanu PF strongholds (mostly rural areas) were often targeted for violence if they were seen in public reading the 'opposition' newspapers.

In 2005, then general manager for the Zimbabwe Independent newspaper, Raphael Khumalo lamented the adverse impact of the crisis on his newspaper's production and readership thus:

Zimbabwe's literacy rate of 90.7% is one of the highest in Africa, providing huge opportunities for growth in newspaper circulation. However, in today's Zimbabwe, high literacy does not translate into wide newspaper readership and sales. Rather, economic and political factors limit the print media's potential for disseminating information to the Zimbabwean populace. Zimbabwe has a population of 12,7million of which 64% is 15 years of age and above. To understand how little newspapers have penetrated their potential market, one has to appreciate that 70% of Zimbabweans able to work are unemployed. And 66% of those employed work in agriculture, where wages are barely sufficient to cover the bare essentials. Of the remainder in employment, 10% are in industry, whilst 24% are in the service sector.

The crisis therefore left the citizens in Zimbabwe largely at the mercy of the state media, in particular state radio, which reaches most of the population . However, what is also interesting to note is that the onset of the Zimbabwe crisis also coincided with the rapid proliferation of the Internet, and this presented 'connected' citizens with alternative sources of information. In 2005, for example, citizens were able to access a couple of alternative news websites hosted from outside the country such as newzimbabwe.com, as well as alternative, short wave radio stations such as Studio 7 and SW radio Africa. Radio Voice of the People was to follow. Another important addition to the new media ecology was Zimonline news website, which was launched from South Africa by former Zimbabwe journalist Basildon Peta, and which received funding support from IMS and other donors.

The International Roundtable on Media Support Strategies for Zimbabwe
In November 2005, the IMS, together with MISA, OSISA and NIZA took the initiative to organise a roundtable that would bring together different NGOs working in media development support in Zimbabwe, journalists and other interested parties. The objective of the roundtable was "to share ideas, undertake analyses and develop strategies among (the media development partners) while interfacing and consulting with representatives and practitioners of the media and the information rights community in Zimbabwe".

This was not the first time international development partners had met to strate-

gise about structured interventions in the Zimbabwean media scenario. In 2002, for example, representatives of Zimbabwean media and civic groups drew up strategies for mobilising broader support for free expression and access to information. The process was facilitated by Article 19 and the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA). However, not much seems to have come out of the 2002 initiatives. As Kupe and Lush noted in 2005, "some of those involved (in the 2002 initiative) felt that these initiatives might have been ahead of their time, as everyone was still focussed on short-term solutions to the Zimbabwean 'crisis'."

The 2005 roundtable flagged several issues/areas for possible intervention and support. These included the following:
• Media law reform
• Support for media practitioners in the Diaspora
• Support for community and alternative media
• Sustainability and viability beyond the investment of cooperating partners
• Ethical reporting in a hostile environment
• A plan of action for media freedom in Zimbabwe.

By the end of the roundtable, future priority areas identified for support included the following:
• Legal and institutional reforms
• Professional cohesion
• Resource mobilisation for the media
• Strategic networking between internal and Diaspora media
• Strategies for countering state propaganda
• Promoting community and alternative media.

Between 2005 and the present, the IMS and its partners have been working to a large extent within this framework and, naturally, adjusting their focus areas as the political and socio-economic realities on the ground in Zimbabwe changed.

Conclusion

The IMS media programme in Zimbabwe was launched against the background of a profound crisis, which affected all sectors of the country's life, and which fundamentally negated the right to freedom of information and expression, which was enshrined in the constitution. As its legitimacy waned amidst failure to rescue the economy, the state resorted to coercion as a strategy of containing dissent, arguing that the country was in the midst of a 'war' and therefore 'normal' rules would not apply. In this context, the practice of independent journalism became nearly impossible, just as it became dangerous to express oneself in opposition to the government on any subject. Under constant attacks, the independent media and civil society groups mobilised—albeit not always coherently and strategically—to challenge the state dominance of the mediated public sphere, and to bring the violations in the country to the attention of both regional and international communities. Nine years down the line the media landscape in the country has experienced some changes, though not as profound as would be expected. It is possible that from here the landscape could witness further democratic reforms, thanks to the ongoing IMPI process. But it is also possible that the situation will either remain as it is or even slide further.

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