



Media News

Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa

MediaNews 27 December 2007/ Quarterly newsletter of NiZA 's Media Programme

The sad demise of MediaNews

by Astrid Schipper

This 27th edition will be the last MediaNews to be published. As NiZA wants to present a new organisational profile to its audience - see the article on the 'New NiZA' on page 3 - and as the staff contingency for the Programmes Department will be minimised per February 2008, we decided that it is no longer an option for us to continue publishing this newsletter that has existed for 7 years.

Personally I have been involved in the publishing of MediaNews for over three years and I feel sad that I have to say 'Goodbye' to what I feel was a valuable communication tool for a valuable programme; NiZA's Media and Freedom of Expression Programme. Herewith I would like to share some of the history of MediaNews.

After three years of supporting activities in the field of media development, in 2000 NiZA was the very first civic organisation in the Netherlands to be granted funding from Personnel Services Overseas - PSO - for running a thematic capacity building programme. NiZA's Media and Freedom of Expression Programme was born. A comprehensive programme aimed at strengthening the capacity of the non - state owned media sector throughout Southern Africa.

With the launch of the Media Programme came the realisation that we needed to inform our

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audience of what we were doing. Initial objective of MediaNews was to create a support base for the activities of the Media Programme in the Netherlands. Therefore, it was predominantly sent to Dutch recipients who somehow had a connection with the Media Programme. The first issue was published in September 2000.

After the other two NiZA thematic programmes also received funding, a general NiZA newsletter

NiZA's Media Programme supports civil society organisations in Southern Africa that contribute to the creation of more democratic and open societies where governments are held accountable to citizens' needs and interests. To this end the Media Programme supports the strengthening of our partner organisations so that they can: 1. Influence the media and freedom of expression policies and legal environment in the SADC region to reach a conducive freedom of expression environment, 2. Increase access to information for citizens, 3. Train media professionals to deliver more balanced and accurate information on key political, social and economic issues, 4. Improve the financial sustainability of media outlets.

www.niza.nl/medianews

was created. MediaNews became the vehicle to distribute information specifically on Media Programme partners, their projects and on Southern African media development issues.

Adolescence

An evaluation of MediaNews was conducted in 2005 to ascertain whether MN was appreciated by its audience. This evaluation and the subsequent discussions with industry experts from the SADC taught us that the MediaNews readership ranged from media development experts to media practitioners - predominantly in the SADC - and people working in civil society and government. And that these people most valued the information we provided on our partner organisations and their activities as, "One does not otherwise know of NiZA's activities and partners". Another comment sourced stated: "The newsletter provides me with actual news from the inside, which normally would be difficult for me to find out."

The evaluation revealed that respondents especially valued the practical information. As a journalist from newspaper the Namibian pointed out: "I mainly like to read about the activities that the Media Programme supports. Also, articles containing background information on the media situation in Southern Africa...are very interesting to me. But practical information is even more valuable to me than information on general developments. I would like to read which trainings are being held and how I can subscribe to participate in these trainings."

Other learning point that that we stumbled upon was that MediaNews should use the Media Programmes' own resources better. For example, by inviting a prominent media and freedom of expression expert that we worked with since the inception of the Media Programme, Jeanette Minnie, to write a column for MediaNews on an on-going basis. Another outcome of this insight was for us to ask the young Dutch journalists who were sent to media outlets in southern Africa via our youth Programme to write articles for Media News on a more regular basis. After Elles van Gelder, a former participant in this programme, became editor of the newsletter this even reversed

to these journalist actively offering ideas for articles to MediaNews.

Information brokering

Also we didn't realise from the start that information brokering was such a vital requirement for our stakeholders in the SADC. It took feedback from partners during a partner consultation at the end of 2004 for the Media team to realise information went up and down between NiZA and one or two partner organisations, but that information didn't 'circulate'. "MediaNews should facilitate communication between stakeholders in the South," partners said. From that moment MediaNews announced the publication of reports in newsflashes providing links to the publishing organisations and thus facilitated accessibility.

Readers were also interested in the issue of critical reporting on the activities NiZA supports to enable learning. As one reader put it: "I would like to read more case studies and in-depth discussions about successes and failures in media for development. It's great that the newsletter cheerleads about all the great stuff you are funding. It might be nice to have a column on best practices, lessons learned, challenges, etc." This was great feedback though it proved to be really difficult to get partners agreeing to cover failure in the newsletter. All were interested to read it from others, but whereas our programme evolves around capacity development and learning it appeared to be taboo to provide insights on own failure.

Lesson learnt

Due to the negative reply to our funding proposal from the Dutch Ministry of Development Cooperation NiZA had to dramatically shrink its operations. NiZA Board and management decided not to prolong its thematic capacity building programmes after the current funding period ends in 2008. Staff to run the three programmes has been cut from 15 FTE at the start of 2007 to a current 4 FTE. Envisaged is another cut to 1.6 FTE in the second half of 2008. The harshest lesson learnt is not to become too dependent on one funder for your operations.

In the meantime, the actual cooperation on the ground has already begun. In the preparatory phase of the 2008 campaigns on resources, for instance, ActionAid will provide the international component, by means of their offices in Africa who will be feeding us all-important research information, the joining-in of ActionAid Sweden or UK, and ActionAid lobbyists targeting international politics.

Liz van Omme is NiZA's Senior communications officer

Action Aid International www.actionaid.org
NiZA www.niza.nl

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The footprint of the Media Program

by Raymond Joseph

Raymond Joseph is a freelance journalist and media trainer who has been involved in a wide variety of NiZA-funded projects. In this personal story he tells about his experiences with NiZA's Media Program and some of their projects. "What is certain is that NiZA has made a real difference to the media landscape over the years," he emphasises.

Slipping and sliding along the gravel road, thick bush and trees on either side, all my attention is focused on making sure the car doesn't bog down in the soft sand. But as we come around a bend all that is forgotten and I am forced to slam on brakes, as I spot a herd of elephant crossing the road a mere 30 metres ahead.

With me in the car were Postrick Kupulo and Precious Sinyepe, two journalists from the Caprivi Vision, a lively community newspaper in the small Namibian town of Katima Mulilo, situated at the end of the Caprivi Strip – once the frontline of apartheid South Africa's war against its southern African neighbours. We were only a few minutes out of their home town, on our way to cover a story about the Children of Zion home - a remarkable NGO situated on the banks of the Zambezi River, the border with Zambia - which has given a home and hope to orphans infected and affected by Aids.

Footprints

I was in Katima after the founder of the Caprivi Vision community newspaper, Risco Lumamezi, had appealed to NiZA for assistance with business planning and advertising systems development for his paper, as well as reporting and writing training for a group of volunteers. It was not the first time I had found myself in a remote corner of southern Africa on a mission for NiZA, and once again I was struck by just how deep the organisation's footprints extended into the region.

Lumamezi had turned to NiZA after several other donors and funding agencies had turned down his appeals for help. As a battling, fledgling newspaper still struggling to establish itself, assisting him was considered too risky and his appeals for assistance had been turned down. Not so for NiZA, an organisation that I witnessed step in time and again to assist start-up media projects to get going and also to help others that were already running projects to build their capacity.



Postrick Kupulo, seated, and Risco Lumamezi working on an edition of Caprivi Vision, a small community project

Like the Southern Sun in Keetmanshoop, in the south of Namibia, where a group of volunteers had approached the Polytechnic of Namibia – a long-time NiZA partner - for help to set up a community-based newspaper. They had been trying without any success for a long time to find donors who would help them get their project off the ground. NiZA agreed and for the next three years the Sun shone brightly, until it folded because of a variety of problems.

But, despite the collapse of the Sun, its legacy lives on with virtually all the journalists who were trained there, courtesy of NiZA, working in

different parts of Namibia’s media. The fact is, NiZA has been involved in many media initiatives over the years and, sadly, some of them have not survived. But like the Southern Sun, the training and work experience that the people received – often as unpaid volunteers – meant that they were able to learn skills that enabled them to move on to paid jobs in the media. So in many cases, it is safe to say that even the “ failures” were successes.

Hands-on

It is also not an exaggeration to say that throughout the southern African region there are many people active in the media who got their first break through working in NiZA supported projects. Also in Namibia, NiZA has supported The Big Issue magazine, a feisty and intelligent Street magazine that provides a dignified means of earning a living for the poor and marginalised vendors who sell it.



Polytechnic of Namibia media students

A strong and independent voice that covers issues that are often ignored by the mainstream media, The Big Issue still serves as an important training ground for young journalists. NiZA also played a key role in the setting up of a media diploma course at the Polytechnic of Namibia in Windhoek. This course offers hands-on training for fledgling young student journalists through Echoes, its student-run news agency, which provides practical on-the-job training in a real life newsroom environment. A manual, focusing specifically on community journalism that was produced for the Polytechnic with NiZA’s assistance, remains one of very few of its kind in use in the region.



Activists being trained at Amac in Cape Town to use media as an advocacy tool

In Cape Town NiZA supported the development of training material for the community print production courses offered at (Amac) Arts and Media Access Centre, which gives youth from disadvantaged backgrounds access to media training. Amac also offers media production training and resources to community activists so they can use printed media as an advocacy tool.

Real difference

Another projects that NiZA – with Amac - assisted was Women’s Link, an innovative gender and media project inside Cape Town’s Pollsmoor Prison, where women inmates produce a newsletter that acts as a platform for prisoners a platform to raise issues.



The editorial staff of Women’s Link, an innovative media and gender programme in Cape Town’s Pollsmoor Prison in Cape Town, checks out their latest edition



Editorial planning meeting for Women's Link newsletter in Pollsmoor Prison

Although this is just a personal overview of some of the NiZA-supported projects that I have been involved in over the years, it gives an indication of the variety, and the breadth, of the organisation's involvement in the region. Many were considered far too "risky" by other donors, who all too often choose to fund more established projects, with a higher, "sexier" profile. What cannot be disputed is that NiZA has made a real difference to the media landscape in the region and the organisation leaves behind a rich legacy: but what is less certain is how the gap their departure leaves will be filled.

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Reflections on the "Project Farmers"

by Jeanette Minnie

The NiZA Media Programme will be coming to an end during 2008. This is indeed a regrettable development. Over the past 7 years since the programme's inception has been supporting capacity development projects and programmes in up to 45 media organisations in 12 of countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Over the last three years it reduced support from 12 to 7 countries and from 45 to 20 African media organisations to better focus assistance in countries where it felt its help was mainly needed

and in which it had developed a consolidated grouping of partner organisations.

It nevertheless also continued its support to some of the best known media regional NGO's in southern Africa with reach and strong networking linkages across the countries of the SADC. Some of these include the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), Gender Links, the Southern African Media Trainers Network (SAMTRAN), the NSJ Southern African Media Training Trust (NSJ), the Gender and Media Southern Africa Network (GEMSA), the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism (IAJ) and the Southern African Institute for Media Entrepreneurship Development (SAIMED).

Highly innovative

The Media Programme was characterised by regular collective partner consultation meetings and individual meetings with organisations in the South. Many of the partner organisations were also invited to participate in NiZA's annual Living Year Book event in Amsterdam where they showcased their work to the Dutch public. This was a highly innovative addition by NiZA to the normal NGO practise of publishing an Annual Report. African partners were also invited to many conferences and events in The Netherlands and assisted with further education.

NiZA is also known for other innovations – one of which was involving its partners in its strategic planning processes, thus ensuring that its consultants were not only accountable to NiZA, but to the partner organisations they were assisting as well. Another initiative was encouraging the use of African consultants as another form of capacity building. One of its best contributions has been to enable partner organisations in southern Africa to meet and network with each other – to learn about each other's programmes and to explore joint activities.

Two years ago this led to the formation of the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe, a network of four organisations – some of them former rivals. Earlier this year they attained their first major national achievement – the formation of a voluntary and independent (non-statutory) media council in Zimbabwe that will adjudicate complaints about

the media against an independent code of professional conduct supported by a majority of journalists in the country. The achievement is a feat in a country driven by political division (evident in the media also) and a declaration of media independence in a country where state media oppression is the order of the day.

Grassroot connection

Relationships between the Programme Officers and their respective clusters of partner organisations (media training, freedom of expression, community media as well as broadcasting and ICT's) were also very close (mostly harmonious, but not always). Since NiZA does not provide core cost support to its African partners (salaries and operational costs) it became extremely specialised in the management of individual projects and programmes aimed at strengthening the enabling environment and improving the quality of free and independent journalism in Africa.

The Programme Officers have sometimes (disparagingly) described themselves as “Project Farmers”. It is, however, a very apt description because it captures the close grassroots connection and involvement they enjoy with their partners – this is not development aid practised from afar. NiZA’s Media Programme was always a case of the North taking hands with the South. There must be very few international NGO’s which have as much knowledge of its African partners as the NiZA Media Programme does. It will be most unfortunate if this knowledge is lost in the Netherlands and in Europe.

The Media Programme is known for giving considerable leeway to its partners and respecting their wishes - well most of the time. At one NiZA capacity assessment workshop I attended outside Cape Town in South Africa, the African partners decided that they did not want to deliver verbal summaries each morning of the proceedings of the previous day – as requested by the facilitators. They instead decided to construct plays, write poetry and imitate international television newscasts (including panellists in remote countries) as a means to capturing the most important concepts and learning of the previous day.

I’ve never seen anything like it. It had much to do with the enthusiasm of Kathy Bond Stewart of the African Community Publishing and Development Trust in Zimbabwe (ACDPT), whose organisation writes unusual and very creative books on Freedom of Expression, Democracy at Local Government Level and so forth with rural Zimbabwean communities. It was also driven with the knowledge of African proverbs displayed by Dick Manganga, a former Director of the Southern African Media Entrepreneurship Institute (SAIMED) in Botswana.

Closest friends

Such quirks are not the preserve of the South alone. In another incident to introduce delegates to each other at a strategic planning meetings in Amsterdam, the then Manager of the NiZA Media Programme lined up all the delegates. He then asked us to guess why we were flanked by the people on either side of us. Included were some notables from the so-called developed countries. Well, as it turned out, we had been arranged next to each other from the youngest to the oldest. Needless to say some of those in the North were rather shocked, but to those of us from the South it was very funny with the added advantage (or disadvantage) that age counts for wisdom in the South. The pecking order had been quickly established, with the NiZA Media Programme Manager claiming he was the oldest.

On a more serious note, a tough and comprehensive external mid-term evaluation of the NiZA Media Programme three years ago found that NiZA is considered to be one “of the most important donors and players in the area of media sector development in Southern Africa by both its African partners and external stakeholders”. The media organisations of Southern Africa stand to lose one of their closest and most reliable Northern friends.

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Emergence of a promising generation of journalists

by Ingeborg van Beekum

The Youth Programme of NiZA's Media Program has been running since 2002 with the aim of contributing to a new generation of Dutch journalists who report more balanced and informed on issues in (southern) Africa. More than 40 journalism graduates were offered the opportunity to gain work experience at media outlets or media NGOs in South Africa and Namibia. At its five year anniversary coordinator of the Youth Programme, Ingeborg van Beekum looks at how some of the former participants currently use this experience in their careers.

Skiing in Lesotho, the harrowing situation in Zimbabwe or preparations for the World Cup in South Africa - open any one of the four relatively new free Dutch newspapers and chances are high that you stumble across a story by one of the former Youth Programme participants. Some fell in love with South Africa – more often with one of its inhabitants - and decided to stay and work as a freelancer or stringer for Dutch media. But most of the former participants practice journalism in their home country, with a handful of the journalists eventually deciding to pursue another career or study.

Bertil van Vugt was the very first young journalist sent out by NiZA and worked for South African daily newspapers Cape Times and Cape Argus. Bertil currently works for Africa Interactive, where he is editor-in-chief of www.afrikanieuws.nl, an online magazine on Africa. In this publication he tries to show another side of Sub-Sahara Africa, often neglected in the mainstream media.

“But we do not avoid the hard reality,” says Van Vugt. “The magazine alternates reporting on the ever-growing African economy with articles on Darfur and Congo.” According to the young journalist, his placement significantly contributed to his career in journalism. “I think my experience in South African journalism was one of the decisive factors to take me on board to Africa Interactive.” Furthermore, without his six



Bertil van Vugt

months in Cape Town Bertil says he would not have had the fascination for African developments and issues he currently has.

Broad perspective

The career of young journalist Arjan van Oosterhout took another turn. Arjan, who worked for Cape Argus in 2004, presently works for Dutch trade journal Marketing Tribune. For the past two and a half years he spent his days writing about marketing - not a subject that touches many southern African issues. “I think that the Youth Programme did not influence my career as such, but it did change me personally.” Arjan says he gained a broader perspective of the world. And although writing about the region is not his daily task, he admits he tries to keep up with the recent media and marketing developments in the region.

There are journalists who try to get their African stories in the media, not dreading creative solutions to get their message across. Tisha Eetgerink contributes to the objectives of the programme in her very own way. The story about skiing in Lesotho was hers, but she also tries for other approaches. Eetgerink: “I wrote a few articles on southern Africa, for instance about the band Freshly Ground from Cape Town for the arts & culture section of my newspaper.”

Tisha was placed with the Mail & Guardian online in 2006 and currently works for Dutch daily newspaper De Pers. Eetgerink says her placement in Johannesburg still influences her work: “I notice

that I have more interest for issues in the region reported upon in the Dutch media. Also my outlook has broadened. I am more interested in the world around me.”

Picture your life

While her placement at the Star newspaper ended in September this year, former participant Ilvy Njiokiktjien has not yet returned to the Netherlands. Together with her partner Ilja, she drives back from Johannesburg to the Netherlands, handing out digital cameras in every country she visits on her way home. On her website the young photographer says that her stay abroad made her realise that her view as a photographer is always biased. This is what made sparked Ivy’s idea for project ‘Picture your Life’ - a project that gives Africans the opportunity to document their own life in pictures. Ilvy hopes that the pictures captured will create a pure view of Africa through an African’s eye. In that way she tries to contribute to a different representation of the continent in the Dutch media.



Ilvy (r) and Ilja of Picture your life

It is still too early to say what will be the long-term impact of the Youth Programme, but considering the examples, we can say that a promising generation of sensitised journalists is emerging. Although most of these journalists are not yet in decision-making positions, we can assume that the Youth Programme inspired them to combat the predominantly Eurocentric manner in which Africa is covered by the Dutch media. In the meantime NiZA aims to keep the network together through an online forum, www.afrikajournalisten.nl , to keep Africa in the

picture. The Youth Programme will run until the end of 2008.

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Afrikajournalisten: www.afrikajournalisten.nl
Afrikanieuws www.afrikanieuws.nl
Picture your life www.pictureyourlife.nl

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Zimbabwean news per SMS successful

by Danielle Batist

Six years after Zimbabwean radio station SW Radio Africa started broadcasting from London, its founder Gerry Jackson invented a new way of reaching fellow Zimbabweans back home: by SMS.

In a small office in the northern parts of London, Gerry Jackson and her eight colleagues prepare for another day of sending news into Zimbabwe. Every night, 365 days a year, independent radio station SW Radio Africa gives a voice to fellow countrymen and women back home.

SW Radio was set up six years ago, after Jackson’s Capital FM in the city of Harare was shut down by armed state police guards. Jackson, like many other exiles, felt she had no other choice than moving to the United Kingdom. With a team of exiled Zimbabwean radio producers and journalists she started SW Radio Africa and has run it ever since, broadcasting two hours live per day in English and Shona.



SW Radio Africa on air from London

But even on the other side of the world the station still fell prey to Zimbabwe's control on free media. The station's shortwave signal regularly gets jammed by the Mugabe government. That's why Jackson and her team started to look for alternative ways to reach the Zimbabwean public. Jackson wanted the alternative for the jammed radio signal to be not only effective, but also, like radio, freely accessible for the audience. This is where the idea for an SMS or text message campaign was born.

Creative

In between checking the headlines for today's news programme, Jackson passes the 160 characters for the daily SMS on to SW Radio Africa's web coordinator Richard Allfrey. She points at the piece of paper as she explains: "It is a slight challenge to try and fit the news of the day into this one text message. But as our receivers live in Zimbabwe and got our messages every day, they most often know the backgrounds of what we are talking about. That means you do not have to say a lot to make the point."



Richard Allfrey received the sms he just send

Allfrey opens the web page of the SMS sending provider and shows how the system works. After logging onto the network, it is basically a matter of typing in the message and pressing "send to all". Within the next minute, over 7500

subscribers, almost all of them living in Zimbabwe, receive the text on their mobile phones. Says Allfrey: "Many Zimbabweans do have a mobile phone, and although they often do not have money to call with it, they can still receive messages. We find this is a really effective way of reaching people."

Elections

Since the launch of the campaign earlier this year, the number of subscriptions have increased drastically every day. After the start of the project, which was funded by the Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa (NiZA), tens to hundreds of people contacted SW Radio Africa by e-mail, SMS or phone to drop their phone numbers. Word of mouth led to more subscribers, says Jackson. "Recently we were contacted by a woman who told us she attended a dinner with relatives. At some point, all the people at the table had their phones ringing at the same time. It turned out to be our SMS. That was the moment she said: 'hey, I also want that!'"

With the next presidential election in sight, the station is making plans to use the SMS campaign to an even wider extent. Jackson: "We are in discussion with various groups in Zimbabwe about the best way to use SMSs over the elections. Our plans are not concrete as yet, but we would like to work out a system of response so people can inform us instantly of events on the ground during the election period."

Reforms

Jackson's dream is to one day be able to broadcast from her home country again. "As journalists, of course we all want nothing more than to work in a free Zimbabwe. People in democratic countries get used to a wide array of information provided by various different media. It is hard for them to understand what it is like to have no information at all."

But to be able to build a free media landscape in Zimbabwe, many changes have to come. The recent announcement of potential reforms of the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Authority and the Broadcasting Services Act before the 2008 elections will in any case not change things for the

better, predicts Jackson. “I think it is highly unlikely that the government has any real intention of opening up the airwaves. If they did, it would be one of Mugabe's chess moves – a pretence of more openness- so that the SADC will definitely say the elections were free and fair.”



The SW Africa team, with Gerry Jackson in blue/white

Until the day real press freedom exists in Zimbabwe, Jackson sees her station forced to stay in the UK. “Just as we had no clue how long we would be in London for when we first came here, we still do not know at all.”

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SW Radio Africa www.swradioafrica.com



SWRA wins Media Excellence Award
Newsflash

At a gala evening in London on 20 November the Association for International Broadcasting announced the winners of its 2007 Media Excellence Awards. 150 media executives, journalists, editors, regulators and satellite

operators from every continent gathered at Clothworkers' Hall in the City of London for the AIB *Diner Pensant* hosted by Mishal Husain, one of the anchors on BBC World. Joint winner of the ‘Most Creative Radio Marketing Concept’ was Short Wave Radio Africa for its innovative way of using SMSs to send headline news to mobile phones in Zimbabwe.

According to the AIB judges “SW Radio Africa’s use of SMS text messaging to beat the Zimbabwean censors enables the station to reach an audience under the most difficult censorship conditions”. Said station manager Gerry Jackson: “We have resorted to the SMS strategy as our radio signal has been jammed by the Zimbabwean state on and off over the past years.” “What was very nice was how pleased all the other broadcasters were for us. So many came up afterwards to express their concern about the situation in Zimbabwe and to offer their delight that we are recognised for what we do. We thank NiZA for supporting us and believing in what we do.”

If you have a friend or relative in Zimbabwe who would like to receive the SMS headline news service please email their mobile phone number to: talk@swradioafrica.com



AIB/mars.cwcs.co.uk/aib/index.asp?node_id=13
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Power Reporting Workshop Report
Newsflash

The Wits Power Reporting Workshop is an annual event organised by the Wits Investigative Journalism Workshop (IJW) that offers intensive training in investigative journalism skills for and with investigative reporters from the region and abroad. The last workshop – supported by NiZA’s Media Program - was held at the beginning of September. The report informing you what 308 reporters from 22 countries discussed, can be downloaded from

<http://www.journalism.co.za/ijw/power-reporting-workshop-2007-3.html>

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Under the radar: the independence of the SABC

by Jane Duncan

The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) has often been seen as a model of independent broadcasting in the Southern African region. Yet those who considered it to be so, must be looking with bewilderment at the recent controversies around broadcaster's independence, writes Jane Duncan, director of the Johannesburg based Freedom of Expression Institute.

Evidence of undue political interference has emerged in the appointment procedure of the latest SABC Board, controversial programmes have been unceremoniously removed, and the Managing Director of News and Current Affairs, Snuki Zikalala, has been accused (and found guilty) of blacklisting political commentators who are critical of the government; yet the Board continues to express "full confidence" in him. The whistleblower who exposed the existence of blacklisting, John Perlman, has since resigned. The SABC has even more recently been accused of siding with President Thabo Mbeki, and against Jacob Zuma, in the succession race for ANC and the country's Presidency.

Yet the editorial independence of the SABC is guaranteed in terms of the Broadcasting Act, and the government has denied interfering in the broadcaster's operations. So what exactly is going on? Nominally, the SABC is independent, but its independence has been eroded in subtler ways, which has meant that they fall under the independence radar. There is little evidence of direct external interference in the SABC's editorial content: rather the most pressing problem seems to point to editorial timidity at best, and a growing climate of internal self-censorship at worst. Also, it is significant that the Act protects the SABC's editorial independence only, not its institutional, administrative or financial independence.

Mbeki and Zuma

The most troubling editorial decisions the SABC has made recently relate to the controversies surrounding Mbeki and Zuma's succession race. In August 2005, a SABC cameraman failed to record the booing of the Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, by Jacob Zuma supporters, possibly because of self-censorship. In December 2005, the SABC cancelled a planned interview with Zuma on the eve of his rape trial, and gave contradictory reasons.

Then in February 2006, Ukhozi FM withdrew a pro-Zuma song from its playlist, on the basis that it asserted Zuma's innocence on charges of rape and corruption. In May 2006, the SABC decided not to show a documentary on Mbeki, citing editorial changes that had not been made by the producers, and that it was "incurably defamatory" of the President (the defamation was subsequently "cured" through three relatively insignificant editorial changes). Another documentary in the same "Unauthorised" series, on soccer supreme Irvin Khoza, was apparently also altered to put Khoza in a more flattering light.

Culture of deference

Other controversies have not necessarily focussed on the succession battle. In April 2007, the SABC withdrew a documentary on circumcision after pressure to do so from traditional leaders, and delayed the screening of "After Nine", a drama based on a black gay man in a straight relationship. These incidents implied that the SABC was not prepared to defend its own editorial independence, and the editorial integrity of its commissioned filmmakers: hardly a recipe for encouraging cutting edge local productions.

This culture of deference, combined with a fear of risk-taking, has been confirmed by a qualitative report on SABC current affairs, commissioned by the News and Current Affairs department from the research organisation Plus 94. This report contains a finding that that SABC current affairs programmes were not considered credible in the eyes of SABC listeners and viewers, with the exception of Special Assignment.

A Master's thesis by journalist Corinna Arndt also exposed pressures on the internal independence of SABC journalists by SABC managers and Board

members. She argues that these structures “manage dissent...using pressure and rewards that, in combination, appear to effectively stifle independent thinking and hence work against editorial independence, and a professional ethos integral to the SABC’s public broadcasting mandate”.

Self censorship

In a climate of uncertainty, where managers and even Board members dabble in decision-making that should be left to journalists, there is a growing tendency to self-censor to please the powers-that-be internally and externally, particularly when it comes to controversial decisions that may offend the government or the ruling party. The Board’s protection of Zikalala, coupled with the resignation of Perlman, has sent the message to staff that wrongdoing is rewarded, and speaking out is punished.

Many of these problems can be laid at the door of the Board, which is selected by Parliament through a public nomination process, and then appointed by the President. While this is, on the surface of things, a perfectly reasonable process that many countries struggling to attain independent broadcasters aspire to, the reality is somewhat different. The process lends itself to horse-trading: so one political party may concede a candidate – not because of their inherent suitability for the Board – but because they want one of their candidates to be accepted by the opposition, and are therefore willing to concede a candidate backed by the opposition.

However, even more problems creep in when Parliament is dominated by one political party, especially if this party holds an outright majority. This is the case with the ANC, which in 2007, used its majority to push through a list of candidates for the Board that opposition parties were opposed to. At least five of the 12 candidates were controversial for opposition parties and three Mbeki sympathisers were imposed even on the ANC’s Members of Parliament.

Biases

Since then, senior ANC members such as the General Secretary of the ANC and ANC MPs, have spoken out about their unhappiness with the



process, as they felt that Mbeki supporters on the Party’s National Executive Committee imposed the list on them. These events underline the fact that an appointment process controlled by Parliament rather than the Minister is still capable of being manipulated politically. It is also another indication of just how disempowered Parliament has become under Mbeki’s Presidency, and how desperate the power struggle within the ANC has become.

The SABC’s administrative independence has also been eroded over time. In 2003, when the SABC was incorporated as a public company, the Minister concluded the SABC’s articles of association with the broadcaster, which effectively give the Minister control over key decisions of the Board. In terms of the articles, the three top managers of the SABC are appointed by the Minister, not the Board., including the CEO, who is also the SABC’s editor in chief. This means that the Minister exercises indirect control over the SABC’s most controversial editorial decisions. Also, the Minister has a power of veto over the SABC’s strategic objectives, business plan, budget and training programme. The Minister enjoys all these powers in spite of the fact that the Broadcasting Act states that “the Board controls the affairs of the Corporation”.

In short, the SABC experience is a lesson to other countries attempting to transform from state to public broadcasting. Independence cannot be arrived at by taking Board selection processes away from Ministers and giving them to Parliaments. Public broadcasters do not become independent simply by writing “independent” into their founding statutes. Indirect control can be as devastating as direct control; in fact, indirect control can be even more devastating, as it may work its logic more insidiously.

Jane Duncan is the Executive Director of the Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI), partner organisation to NiZA’s Media Programme.

FXI www.fxj.org.za

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Blogs: an innovative way to speak up

by Elvira van Noort

The NiZA sponsored Digital Citizen Indaba (DCI) in Grahamstown recently dealt with Africa’s blogosphere. Blogging is becoming increasingly popular in Africa and can prove a valuable way for NGOs and individuals to make their voices heard, says Elvira van Noort, a journalist with a keen interest in the web as a tool.

The emergence of an African blogosphere has come a long way. In the past two years blog statistics show an exceptional growth in the number of blogs from Africa, with 25 037 blogs in South Africa alone. Blog search engine Technorati tracked more than 106 million blogs since September this year worldwide.

A weblog or blog is a website where entries are written in chronological order with the latest post at the top. Setting up a blog requires little knowledge of Internet software, web design or programming languages. Every hosting service carefully explains how to get started and how to manage your blog. Two well-known and widely used blog hosting services are Blogger and popular African blog hosting service Amagama.

Local stories

Remmy Nweke, senior IT journalist in Nigeria, writes for the blog www.itrealms.blogspot.com. During the DCI in Grahamstown, Nweke said he “started blogging to write more local stories and to provide more local content”. In addition, blogging also provides access to a bigger, more diverse audience. Signing up with blog aggregators and online blog communities such as Amatomu, that list weblogs and links to them, makes it easier for people to find your blog online.

Amanda Atwood from the NGO Network Alliance Project Kubatana, an online community for Zimbabwean activists, discussed during the conference the challenge to reach readers with their blogs. The biggest challenge is the lack of Internet access in a large part of Africa. A possible solution, according to her, is to feature blog postings in an e-mail newsletter because “we find that many Zimbabweans may have e-mail access at their workplace, but not Internet access”. This could be key in other African countries, where access to the Internet is limited or where access to certain websites is prohibited.



Swahili blogger Ansbert Ngumuro answers questions from the DCI audience

Print blogs

Another way to make blogs available to the audience is by incorporating SMS and print.. Kubatana sends text messages with featured content to a list of subscribers and invites them to give feedback via SMS. Also, because of the high literacy levels, Kubatana publishes a print news sheet with content from blog postings whenever they are able to do so. “This might be an idea which other countries can take up even more successfully - in Zimbabwe print information is often viewed with suspicion, but in a more open media environment, a weekly or even monthly print version of a popular blog or two might be a useful way to make that information more accessible”, says Atwood.

Besides reaching a bigger audience, the use of e-mail newsletters, SMS, and print can also make more ‘ordinary’ voices heard. “We feature comments from e-mail and SMS subscribers on news issues,” explains Atwood. “This gives those who read our blog a greater sense of many different takes on life in Zimbabwe.”

Two trustworthy websites that include a number of blogs from Africans all over the continent are AfricaNews and Global Voices Online. Readers



Philemon Msangi, a photo blogger from Tanzania, speaking at the DCI

can also do a worldwide search for blogs and blog content, using well-known search engine Google or African blog search engine Afrigator.

Vloggers

Bloggers are also able to upload photos, videos or audio. Examples of multimedia blogs are Tanzanian’s Philemon Msangi’s photo blog, and a popular video blogger, or rather ‘vlogger’, is Khaya Dlanga from South Africa. Khaya’s ‘vlog’ deals with a broad range of topical issues that he encounters at work or while out with his friends in a humorous way. Another key attraction to the multimedia blogs is that it too is affordable for the masses - it is not necessary to buy expensive equipment; a good mobile phone can take photos and shoot video with a good enough quality to be broadcast.



Vlogger Khaya Dlanga entertains the audience with his videos during DCI

Bloggers and potential bloggers should also not be deterred by language constraints as bloggers blog in many languages. Ansbert Ngumuro from Free Media in Tanzania blogs in Swahili: “Technology does not speak a language, but we people do.” Whatever the format and whatever the language, blogging is getting Africa talking – and allowing people to be heard.

Elvira van Noort (elviravannoort@hotmail.com) is a freelance correspondent and Master student in Media Studies as well as a Teaching Assistant in Print Journalism at NiZA Media Program partner organisation Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa.

DCI Conference <http://dci.ru.ac.za/wiki>

Info about blogs

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blog>

Copyright and blogs: www.creativecommons.org

Blog search engine Technorati

www.technorati.com

Amatomu www.amatomu.com

Blogger www.blogger.com

Amagama www.amagama.com

Kubatana www.kubatana.net

AfricaNews www.africanews.com

Global Voices Online

www.globalvoicesonline.org

Google blog search

www.google.com/blogsearch

Afrigator www.afrigator.com

Msangi's photo blog

http://mwenyemacho.blogspot.com

Vlogger Dlanga

www.youtube.com/profile?user=khayav

Tanzania blogs in Swahili

www.ngurumo.blogspot.com

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MISA Zimbabwe and ZACRAS visit the Netherlands

Newsflash

In November NiZA Media Programme hosted MISA- Zimbabwe director Rashweat Mukundu and Zimbabwe Association of Community Radio Stations (ZACRAS) Chair Chris Mhike for a few days. Mukundu and Mhike returned from attending a Media Freedom Conference in Norway and stopped over in the Netherlands to address a meeting of Zimbabwe Watch. Zimbabwe Watch is an independent coalition of organisations in the Netherlands that contributes to the creation of a democratic Zimbabwe.



Chris Mhike and Rashweat Mukundu being interviewed for Radio Netherlands Worldservice.

The theme of their presentations to the Dutch organisations was the media freedom situation in Zimbabwe, in particular the legislative situation and the unfriendly laws that are not conducive to the development of a free, professional and responsible media environment.

Mukundu and Mhike stressed the need for an overhaul of the current state broadcasting situation in Zimbabwe into a public broadcasting institution as well as the need for a more diverse broadcasting landscape in their country to provide a voice to all Zimbabweans. They emphasised that MISA Zimbabwe and ZACRAS will continue their campaign on the right for Zimbabweans to public broadcasting and the need for a diverse range of broadcasting organisations to be issued with licenses to do so.

ZimbabweWatch - www.zimbabwewatch.org

MISA - Zimbabwe - www.misazim.co.zw/

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Struggle for Zimbabwe community radio

by Koline Nyoni

The first sign of a democracy going off track is the repression of the free expression, the media in particular. The Zimbabwean crisis is no better portrayal of this. It is evident that Zimbabwe's gradual economic and political decline was significantly preceded by a clampdown on the limited independent print media and failure to establish independent broadcasters in the country, particularly community radio that is more participatory and critical to community development and participatory democracy.

Twenty-seven years after its independence, no private radio stations have been licensed in Zimbabwe. The closest the country ever came to private radio was the early attempt of community radio by the then Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation's (RBC), Radio Mthwakazi. Radio Mthwakazi was run from Luveve, a high density suburb in the country's second largest city, Bulawayo. The station was run under the management of Ndebele speaking journalists who ran programmes relevant only to the people in that

region of the country in content and importantly, in their local language. The programming covered largely cultural and traditional aspects of the Ndebele people's culture, as well as their social and domestic issues.

While there was this attempt at community broadcasting - albeit state controlled - by a colonial and undemocratic government, independent Zimbabwe has regressed even further as the state strengthened its stranglehold on the broadcast media. It is under this premise that the Zimbabwe Association of Community Radio Stations (ZACRAS) was launched in 2004. ZACRAS was initiated by already existing community radio initiatives - the National University of Science and Technology (NUST community radio initiative) and Radio Dialogue - of Bulawayo and the Media Institute of Southern Africa-Zimbabwe (MISA Zimbabwe). Both had at the time been key to the formation of other community radio initiatives in smaller towns under the it's "Free the Airwaves" campaign.

Mushrooming

The major objective of ZACRAS is to broaden the campaign for community broadcasters in the country. ZACRAS does this by assisting the mushrooming initiatives in fundraising activities, capacity building and advocacy work thus increasing the participation of the community in not only their activities but in the initial campaign for a form of broadcast media that benefits them directly. Community radio thrives on participation and relevance to the community its serves.

ZACRAS also intends to lobby government through Parliament for the repealing of the current Broadcast Services Act (BSA) to make it friendlier to other players in the industry. Recently, when the Broadcast Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) was put to task by the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Transport and Communications for not having licensed any new players, they responded that even though they had called for applicants, none of them had qualified given the restrictive requirements provided for in the Act. The need to change the BSA now resonates even within government circles.

Eventually, when community radio becomes a reality in Zimbabwe, ZACRAS intends to continue its representative and capacity building role. Currently the ZACRAS' membership consists of seven institutional members, namely Kumakomo Radio of Mutare, Berina Radio of Kadoma, Radio Dialogue in Bulawayo, Radio Kwelaz of Kwekwe, Gweru Community Radio, Wezhira Community Radio in Masvingo and Community Radio Harare.

The greatest challenges facing ZACRAS include the initial registration of the community radio initiatives. All the initiatives have had to be registered as trusts and aside from identifying members to be trustees, this includes coming up with a constitution. Another challenge that the association has faces is that of ensuring that the association is genuinely recognised as representing community radios that actually exist by having membership that is visible and accepted within its own locality.

Key to development

All the initiatives have gone through advocacy training and have begun activities in their various communities to conscientise the community on the benefits of community radio and current barriers to the licensing of community broadcasters. The overall objective of the activities is to bring the communities to realise that they are key to the development of our nation - when they have a platform to speak out, question their local leadership, share ideas and contribute to the policies that govern them through smaller independent community radio; and therefore put pressure on government to grant community broadcasting licenses. The activities include awareness roadshows that usually include drama and dance, community meetings on topical issues that affect the various communities, and exhibitions held at local fairs in the different cities.

ZACRAS intends to see the community initiatives simulate broadcasting in their localities by capacitating them to produce their own audio programmes and news to be distributed to their membership and eventually the community at large; so that their communities can begin to visualise the possibility of community broadcasting. The current media set-up in the country has resulted in Zimbabweans being

distanced from the media and the general feeling is that the media is another part of society which they cannot own or contribute to. ZACRAS' broad campaign for diversity in the broadcast industry intends to break that barrier.



To date, capacity building of the community radio initiatives is a critical area because besides the need for the community radio initiatives to be able to advocate for community radio, they also need to learn, in preparation for broadcast, how to run their radio stations, fundraise and produce programmes for broadcast or distribution to their communities as is the case now.

The Campaign for Community Radio is part of the overall bid for independent media in Zimbabwe. It is media in its truest sense; radio that speaks the language the people understand, deals with their issues and where their voice or opinion counts. That is the ZACRAS struggle.

Kolwe Nyoni is MISA-Zimbabwe Assistant Programmes Officer

More info on ZACRAS:
www.misazim.co.zw/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=128&Itemid=1

The African Media Initiative (AMI)

by Jeanette Minnie

A persistent effort over the past year has paid off in terms of the formation of the African

Media Initiative (AMI). AMI wants to strengthen media in Africa.

AMI is seeking to consolidate and take forward the research produced by two important complementary but separate initiatives over 2006/7. The one was the African Media Development Initiative (AMDI) led by the BBC World Service Trust which conducted media research in 17 African countries assisted by Rhodes University in South Africa and the Ahmadu Bello University in Nigeria. The second was research conducted by the UN Economic Commission for Africa by consulting with media practitioners in Africa in five sub-regional consultation meetings and through a continent wide email discussion on the question of how to strengthen the media in Africa. The UNECA's initiative was known as STREAM.

AMI has been formed with the BBC World Service Trust serving as the secretariat of an African steering committee comprising former task force members of STREAM, former associates of AMDI and other African media experts. AMI held two meetings this year to consolidate its board and secretariat and to plan its future activities.

Increased resources

AMI aims to establish a strategic mechanism for delivering increased resources and coordination to develop independent and pluralistic media and to strengthen the enabling environment of the media across the continent over a five-year period. Over the next nine months AMI aims to generate four important outcomes to create a successful large scale mechanism for future investment in media development in Africa.

Firstly, it has identified a team of experts who will produce a detailed set of proposals for unified and long term work to strengthen the African media sector. Secondly, it will organise a stakeholder's forum to allow further consultation and input into the proposals. Thirdly, it will undertake a sensitisation and education campaign about the project's objectives with governments, high level institutions, private and public sector donors, investors and potential partners. Fourthly, subject to additional funding, AMI will hold a donor's meeting to discuss long-term funding of the

approved mechanism for strengthening media in Africa.

AMI held its first meeting with the expert team on December 1 and 2 in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Jeanette Minnie was a member of the STREAM task force and until recently a member of the steering committee of AMI, but is now stepping down to serve as a member of the AMI team of experts.

Minnie (<mailto:jcmin@iafrica.com>) is an advisor to NiZA on freedom of expression.

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New dossiers published by FAIR

by *Evelien Groenink*

December 2007 the Forum for African Investigative Reporters (FAIR) will launch a dossier titled ‘The indifferent industry. Big Pharma, essential medicines, and Africa’s sick’. The dossier by this partner of NiZA’s Media Programme is the result of a year-long transnational investigation in five African countries by a ten-member team of investigative journalists and one editor from these countries.

The conclusion of the dossier: while most diseases currently killing people in Africa are (sometimes even easily) treatable, Africans continue to die in their thousands, often as a result of the pharmaceutical industry's protection of patented medicines. This patent protection makes it difficult and often impossible for African countries and individuals to purchase much-needed medicines, often produced cheaper by generic medicines manufacturers in India, Thailand and Brazil.

The conclusion is tragically underscored by the fact that, during the investigation, three FAIR members became ill and two of them died after they had failed to timeously access proper treatment.

The FAIR dossier does not pin all the blame for untreated illness in Africa on the pharmaceutical industry. "We do not exonerate our own governments, which are often weak and plagued

by corruption. We accept also that ignorance and denial are damaging factors that can't be blamed on an industry alone", the TI team writes in a preface to the dossier. It does, however, appeal to the industry's image as a “lifesaving” one and its verbally supported Corporate Social Responsibility values, finally concluding that "instead of pharmaceutical suppliers to our countries being a force for good, they often, consciously or unconsciously, collude with the bad".

In January 2008, FAIR will also publish the results of its two 2007 small grants awards for local African investigations. The brochure will contain the resulting two deep-digging investigative articles, one exposing ritual infanticide in Benin (by Gerard Guedegbe), and the other the emptying of the Namibian seas by ill-thought-out 'black empowerment' business ventures (by John Grobler). From January, the brochures can be ordered through the FAIR website where you can already now order ‘Big Pharma, essential medicines, and Africa’s sick”

Both the transnational investigation and the small grants programme receive support from NiZA’s Media Programme.

FAIR web site: www.fairreporters.org.

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Elections and media freedom in 2008

The people of Zimbabwe, Angola and Swaziland are expected to vote next year. MediaNews looks into the challenges the media face in these countries concerning press freedom and access to information in what is generally perceived to be an indicator for the level of democracy: the elections.

Zimbabwe

by *Andrew Moysse*

The media in Zimbabwe face great challenges with the upcoming elections next year. Criminalising the practice of gathering and disseminating information must be the most fundamental offence against our right to freedom of speech – and it is this, of course, that represents the bedrock of the

government's control of what we know and how we receive information.

This patently unconstitutional control over who can practice journalism is of course, contained in AIPPA, the law that has so devastated our media landscape and serves as the icon of all the laws that restrict and control the operation of all forms of media in Zimbabwe and indeed, even what we can say in public. AIPPA has led to the massive domination of the media in Zimbabwe by government controlled institutions and the suffocation of most alternative independent forms of media.

Information gap

While a very few independent weekly newspapers have been allowed to continue to operate so that the government can claim a credible alternative to its propaganda, a serious “information gap” remains, which represents the second obstacle to reporting the election campaigns adequately.

It is also common practice for public bodies to withhold information that should be in the public domain. Ask any member of the independent media and they will tell you that the police regularly refuse to confirm incidents, especially where the offenders support or belong to the ruling party. The Electoral Commission also withholds information necessary for the public to understand the electoral processes, as does the Registrar-General's office and all manner of other government departments. Worse still, the government media are used to misinform the public – especially about electoral issues.

A recommendation must be that the independent media and civic society improve their collaboration many weeks before the elections to raise these issues and demand

Intimidation

There are, of course more challenges, and these include the intimidation of journalists; the likelihood of their arrest and harassment, even physical assault. Then there is the inability of the independent media that exists to penetrate the market. The weeklies do what they can; the radio stations try to reach the people on a daily basis

but the government is happy to tell the world that it jams their broadcasts; and a week without an alternative daily paper is a very long time when you stage an election on a Thursday in Zimbabwe.

We need to broaden the struggle for information and spread the word to the people to demand adequate information about the electoral processes that they will be subjected to. We are never going to get any repeal of AIPPA and any of the other laws controlling the media between now and the elections. But we must try to embarrass the authorities in every forum we can find to present our case.

Media council

Efforts also should continue to be made to bring the new independent media council to life as soon as possible to fulfil its mandate to monitor the media's performance and comment loudly on the abuse of the public media as messengers of hate and intolerance. It will also be important for the council to encourage the independent media (and for the independent media themselves) to adhere to ethical journalistic practice and international standards of journalism. Poor journalism in the independent media is always seized upon by the government to justify its repressive behavior. We should not give them that opportunity.



Andy Moyse - *Coordinator, Media Monitoring Project, Zimbabwe* - andy@mmpz.org.zw

News sources

The Independent

www.thezimbabweindependent.com

The Standard www.thezimbabwestandard.com/
The Financial Gazette - www.fingaz.co.zw/
The Zimbabwean www.thezimbabwean.co.uk
SW Radio Africa - www.swradioafrica.com
VOA's Studio 7 www.voanews.com/zimbabwe
Zimonline - www.zimonline.co.za
NewZimbabwe.com www.newzimbabwe.com
Zimbabwe Times www.thezimbabwetimes.com



Zimbabweans protesting in the streets, April 2007

Angola

Elections in Angola always seem to be at least one year in the future. In October 2007, President José Eduardo dos Santos declared that the voter registration process was over and parliamentary elections would take place in 2008. These remarks, made during an official visit by Brazilian President Lula da Silva, seemed firmer than the vague predictions of elections that have been made, and then disregarded, in previous years.

Nevertheless, elections have been overdue since 1997. Until an exact date is set, it is wise to treat any promises with caution. Presidential elections are expected a year after the parliamentary vote. Angola's only multi-party election was held in September 1992 as part of a process aimed at ending a long war between the MPLA government and the UNITA rebels. The war resumed weeks later, as UNITA rejected the elections results. After a further decade of conflict followed by five years of peace, the military threat is no longer present, but a democratic culture will probably take much longer to establish

UNITA has complained regularly over the last three years of attacks and intimidation directed at its members as they try to establish party structures in provincial towns. Yet the biggest obstacle faced by UNITA and the many smaller opposition parties comes not from violence, but from the superior organization and resources of the ruling MPLA. Local government officials are often also MPLA office bearers, and the party will be able to call on their loyalty during campaigning and voting.

Government control

Observers from the Southern African Development Community have expressed concern over the degree of government control in the running of the election. The Ministry of Territorial Administration is in charge of the logistics, and the National Electoral Commission, which oversees the electoral process, is dominated by MPLA or government nominees.

Media ownership remains predominantly concentrated in the hands of the government, which controls the country's only daily newspaper, its only terrestrial television station, and its only radio station that has a national reach. The privately owned weekly papers and radio stations are available only in Luanda and a few other coastal cities and provincial capitals and struggle to complete against the heavily subsidised state media.



Selling newspapers in the streets of Luanda

Criminal libel laws continued to be enforced; Felizberto Graça Campos, editor of one of the more respected independent papers was jailed in October for allegedly insulting a former government minister. Campos was sentenced to eight months jail and a hefty fine of 250.000 U\$. On 9 November an Angolan Supreme Court judge ruled that Campos be released from jail pending the outcome of an appeal against his conviction.

While more criticism of government is permitted than in the past, the Campos case is a reminder of the restrictions that remain on the press as elections approach.

Because of his work in Angola the author prefers to stay anonymous

News sources

Jornal de Angola (state daily newspaper)

<http://www.jornaldeangola.com/>

Angolense (independent weekly newspaper)

<http://www.jornalangolense.com/>

Seminário Angolense (independent weekly newspaper) // www.semanarioangolense.net/

Angop (state news agency)

<http://www.angolapress-angop.ao/>

O Apostolado (Catholic news website)

<http://www.apostolado.info/>

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#### Swaziland

*by Comfort Mabuza, director of MISA Swaziland, partnerorganisation to NiZA's Media Programme.*

**Nobody within the status quo wants to commit themselves as to when exactly the 2008 elections in Swaziland will be held. Indicators though are confirming that elections will probably take place between June and September 2008. Sources from the electoral office are indicating that the present parliament will be allowed to finish and debate next-year's budget and then be dissolved by the King around April/May 2008.**

What remains a disturbing factor though is that the country will end up being run by a council of ministers once parliament is dissolved. This will be disastrous in light of the fact that council

previously ended up committing a staggering \$3 Million US Dollars as a deposit towards the purchasing of the King's private jet. The money has never been recovered.

Swaziland continues to leave significant things to chance and guesswork when the people should be kept informed about salient national issues that have great impact on the welfare of the citizenry. The system of government, according to Chapter VII section 79, is democratic, participatory *Tinkhundla* based system that encourages devolution of state power from central government to the constituencies (*Tinkhundla*) centres.

#### Apathy

Under the present arrangement people will still be standing in their own individual capacity, as even the constitution seems to be indicating that individual merit as a basis for election and appointment to public office. What one finds interesting is that the same constitution in Section 25 has somehow opened a free political activism as protection of freedom of assembly and association is guaranteed.

However, most political commentators feel that perhaps it is high time that they begin to organise themselves into some form of alliances and groupings in preparation for the 2008 elections. The forthcoming elections will be an interesting one in that there is already growing concern over who will become members of parliament. Ironically, a large part of the population lack interest in politics anymore because of apathy.

#### Ban

Against this political background, it is a source of great concern that political parties remain banned. However this has not stopped the progressives groups and other interested parties from organising themselves in preparation for the upcoming 2008 elections. Many forums are being held underground and other gatherings are disguised as union meetings as part of crafting strategy. This has seen the consolidation of Swaziland Democratic Front (formerly Swaziland Democratic Alliance – SDA) consisting of the Swaziland's Federations of Trade Unions (SFTU), Swaziland National Association of Teachers

(SNAT) and their partners in Swaziland National Constituent Assemble (NCA).

The restrictive media laws still remain intact, with the 1973 King's Proclamation in freedom of expression and free political activity. Proscribed Publication Act 1968 empowers the minister to proscribe any publications he deems prejudicial to the interests of defense, public safety and public morality. The Sedition and Subversive Activities Act of 1968 also criminalises the publication or making oral statements that will bring hatred and contempt against the person of His Majesty the King. So long as there is no mechanism for reviewing such laws, we can safely say the status quo remains.

The leadership in Swaziland still enjoys this guesswork and it is quite unfortunate indeed, as this is in contradiction with the new constitution order as it infringes on the rights of people who should be allowed to predict their future and plan accordingly.

**News sources**

**Times of Swaziland** [www.times.co.sz](http://www.times.co.sz)  
**Swazi Observer** [www.observer.org.sz](http://www.observer.org.sz)



*Transparency at the ballotbox.....*



*Ondaka newsletter published by NiZA partner*

*Development Workshop in Huambo, central Angola..*