

Monitoring Fairness and Balance in Media Coverage of the March 2022 By-elections

Issue 3: 15-21 March 2022

1.0 Introduction

The media have an ethical obligation to be impartial in their coverage of electoral processes; this requires fairness and balance in their representation of the political players. Through this report Media Monitors tracks if the local media is adhering to these requirements. Monitoring will be informed by Sections 160 E - 160J of the Electoral Act which make provisions for fair and balanced access to the media by all political parties and candidates; fair political advertising, as well as the general conduct of the media in an election that ensures that:

- All political parties and candidates are treated equitably in regard to the extent, timing and prominence of the coverage accorded to them
- Election reports are factually accurate, complete and fair
- A clear distinction is made in the news between factual reporting on the election and editorial comment on it
- Inaccuracies are rectified without delay and with due prominence
- Political parties and candidates are afforded the right of reply
- News media do not promote political parties and candidates that encourage violence or hatred.
- News media avoid language that encourages prejudice or hatred, incites violence and may lead to public contempt against any person or political player

1.1 Methodology

What will be monitored?

To assess coverage, Media Monitors measures the space and time allocated to political actors¹ in print media and broadcasts between 5pm and 9pm (prime time).

Unit of measurement

For this report “media coverage” refers to the direct speech attributed to candidates and political party representatives and when they are mentioned or the subject of a news story

Number of media platforms monitored: 19 (see annex 3 for media set)

¹ Political actors monitored include; national assembly candidates, local authority candidates, party spokespersons and political parties when they are the subject in news stories

1.2 Context

In the third week of March, political rallies continued countrywide while some parties held press conferences to mobilize support for their candidates. The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission's preparations for a successful plebiscite were also in full swing as the commission addressed outstanding administrative issues.

1.2.1 Campaign activities

- Zanu PF held a rally in Binga on 19 March
- CCC held a rally in Mutare on 19 March
- CCC held a rally in Masvingo on 20 March
- MDC-T leader Thokozani Khupe encouraged her party supporters to vote for CCC in the by-elections.

1.2.2 Administrative issues

- Government released \$3 billion to the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission for the March 26 by-elections.
- ZEC announced that names of registered voters would be displayed at polling stations
- ZEC outlined ongoing preparations for the holding of successful by-elections including the accreditation of observers.
- ZEC announced that it had accredited 572 election observers by 21 March.
- ZEC announced the withdrawal of 4 candidates, 3 from MDC A and 1 from CCC, from the by-elections.
- ZEC said the commission would set up an elder's panel and make provisions for assisted voters.
- COTRAD and ZEC collaborated to educate voters in Zaka.

1.2.3 Other environmental issues

- The National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) embarked on a peace campaign.

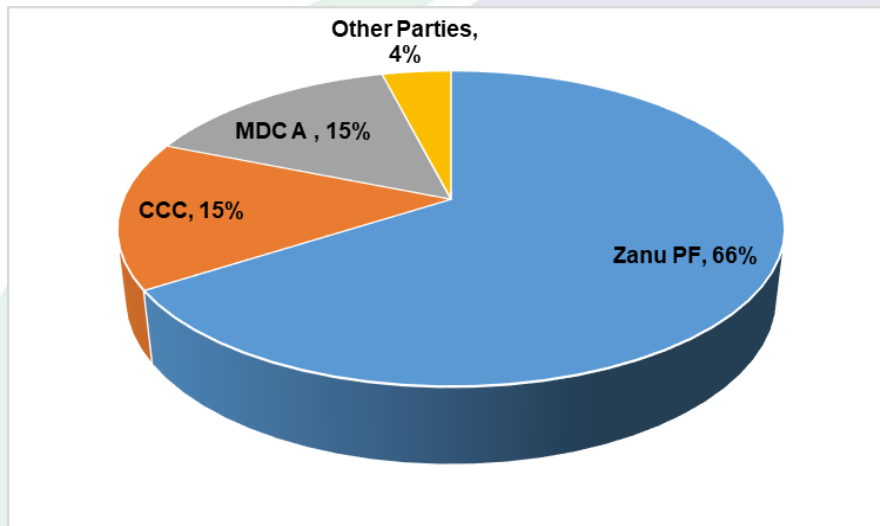
1.3 Summary of Results

- During this week seven (41%) of the 17 political parties and independent candidates contesting in the election received coverage. However, only 3 (18%) of the represented parties received a substantial amount of time and space in the media.
- Coverage of National Assembly candidates declined from 38% in the second week to 11% whilst local government candidates gained prominence receiving 18% of the coverage up from 4% in the previous week.
- There was a 24% decline in the coverage of women political actors, their coverage dropped from 32% to 8%. Their overall visibility in week two was boosted by current affairs programmes. ZBC stations and privately owned newspapers had relatively higher women representation.

2.0 Space and time allocated to political actors

Seven (41%) of contesting parties and independent candidates were covered across the monitored platforms. However, only 3 (18%) of the contesting parties received a significant amount of time and space in the media.

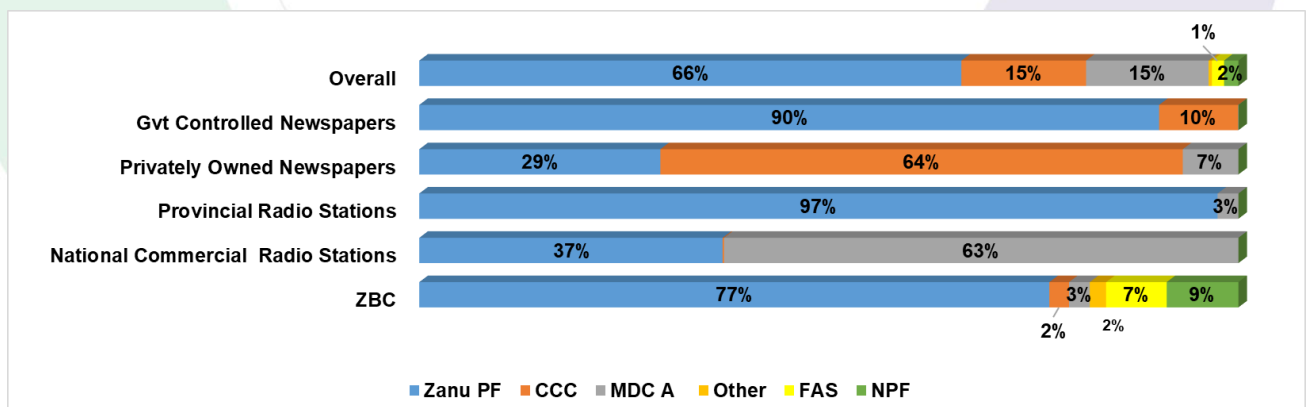
Fig 1. Overall distribution of space and time among political actors (this includes political parties, leaders and candidates) in all media



NB**Space and time allocated UZA, ZLP, FAS and NFP was negligible.

ZANU PF commanded the lion's share of the coverage at 66% while CCC and MDC-A both received 15% of the coverage respectively. The four other parties received 4% of the coverage in total.

Fig 2. Distribution of space and time among political parties by platform



Zanu PF dominated coverage on the government-controlled print and electronic platforms and provincial radio stations. CCC was prominently featured in the privately owned newspapers whilst MDC A was the most featured party on national commercial radio (Star FM and ZiFM).

ZANU PF was the only party that received significant coverage on all the monitored platforms.

Which political actors were allocated space and time?

National assembly candidates lost the traction in the third week of monitoring, occupying only 11% of space and time amongst to political actors, down from 38% recorded in week 2. However, local authority contestants gained considerable visibility in the media, leaping from 4% in week 2 of monitoring to 18% in week 3.

Political parties and party leaders combined for 68% of the coverage as their agendas drew interest from the media. Nelson Chamisa (CCC), Emmerson Mnangagwa (Zanu PF), Peter Munyanduri (NPF), Douglas Mwonzora (MDC A) and Elizabeth Valeri (UZA) are the party leaders who received coverage in the week. Apart from drumming up support for their prospective candidates they articulated their broader electoral goals beyond the March 26 by elections.

Fig 3: Distribution of coverage amongst political actors

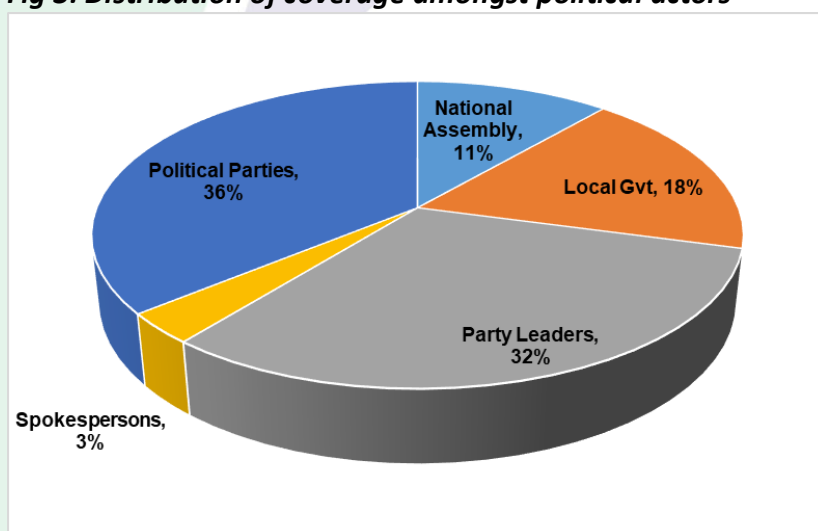
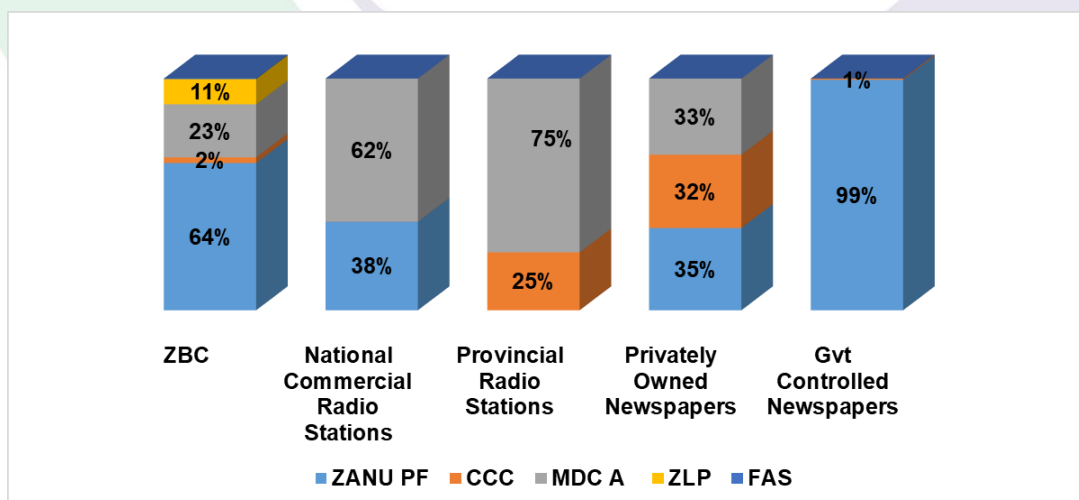


Fig 4: Space and time allocated to National Assembly candidates by platform

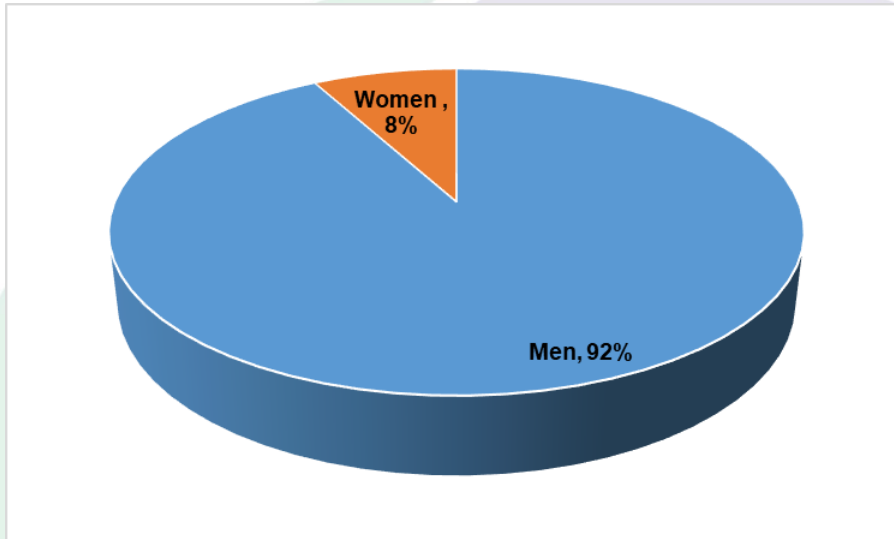


The 11% coverage allocated to National Assembly candidates was distributed across most platforms. Provincial radio stations covered ZEC’s announcement of the withdrawal of four candidates from the by-elections (3 MDC A and 1 CCC).

3.0 Gender representation of political actors featured in the media

During this monitoring period there was a sharp decline in the representation of women political actors as their visibility dropped from 32% in week 2 to just 8% in the current monitoring period. Overall, the gender imbalance in the media’s coverage of elections is a cause for concern.

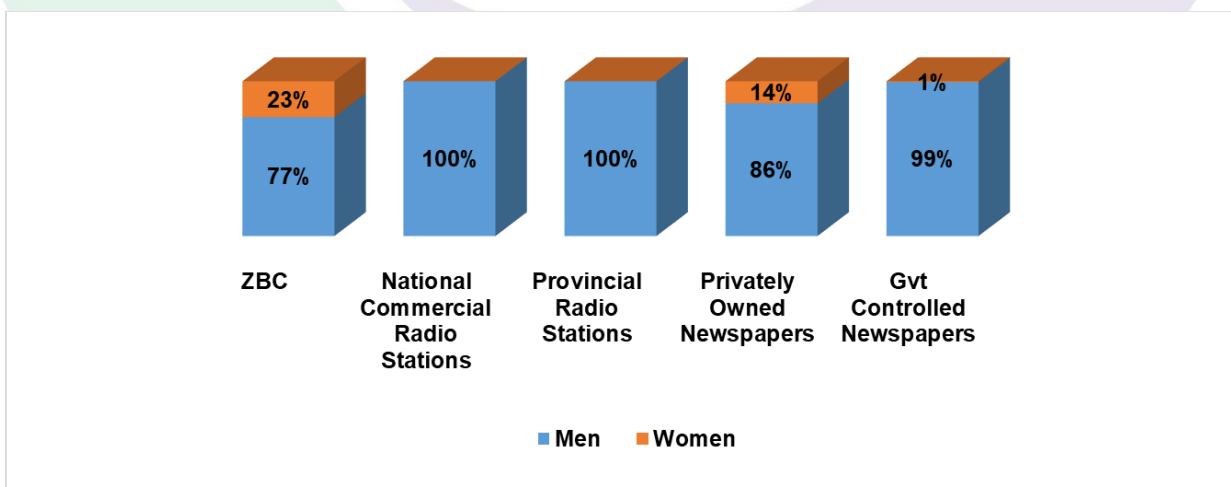
Fig 5: Overall distribution of space and time by gender



Women actors were allocated more space and time on ZBC and privately owned newspapers. ZBC platforms featured Zanu PF candidates for Parliament, Zalerah Makari (Epworth) and Mavis Gumbo (Harare East), and prospective councillors, Betty Nhambu and Marvellous Chisasa (both Zanu PF), Fatima Madamombe (MDC A), and Elizabeth Valeri of UZA in the 23% of coverage taken up by women political actors across the monitored ZBC stations.

The 14% of space taken up by women actors in privately owned newspapers was allocated to CCC spokesperson Fadzai Mahere who communicated the party's position on various issues including the need for women to actively participate in politics.

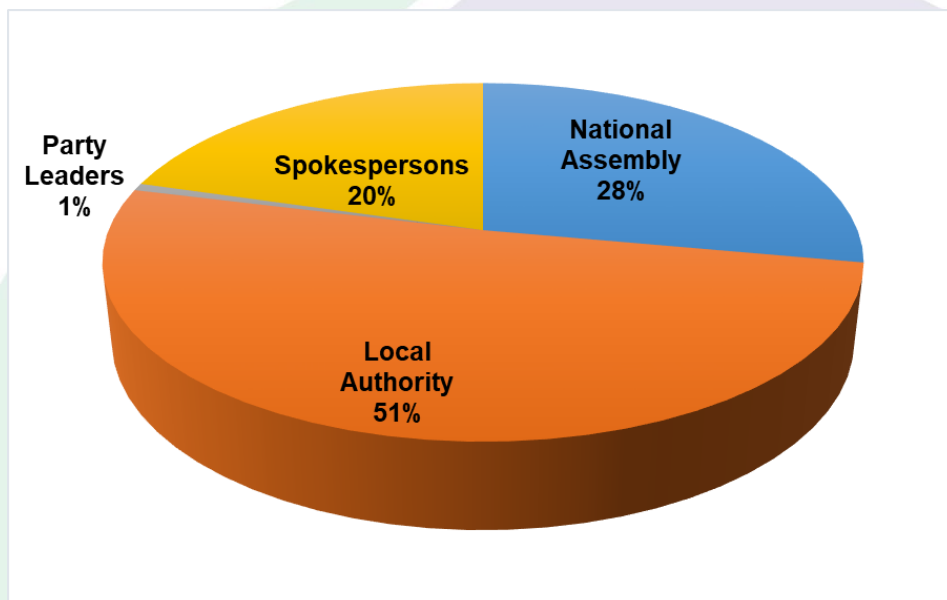
Fig 6: Gender representation in the monitored media



Visibility of women amongst political actors

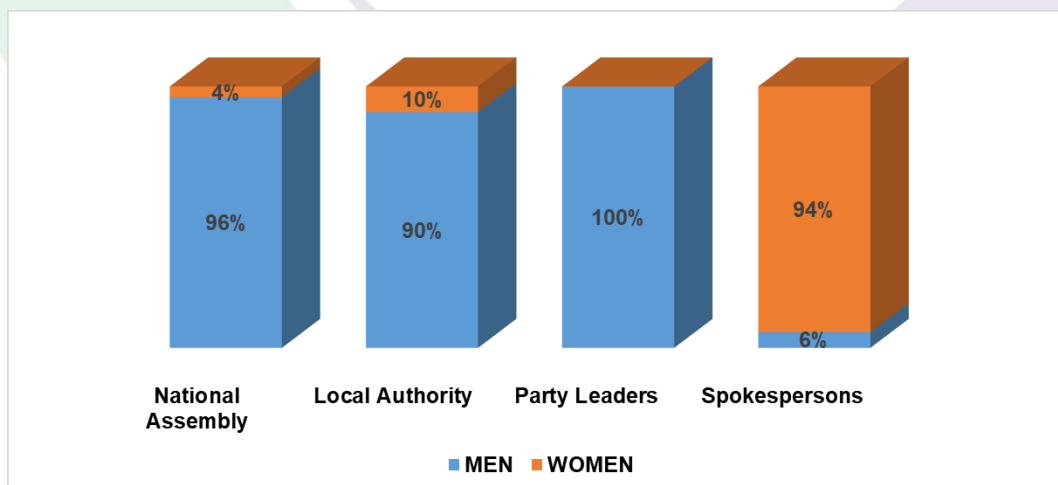
Within the designations of political actors featured on the monitored platforms women were mostly featured as local authority and national assembly candidates. Only 1% of the coverage was dedicated to women party leaders.

Fig 7: Visibility of women as political actors



Female party spokespersons were more prominent than male spokespersons in this week. However, women as National Assembly candidates, local authority candidates and party leaders were under-represented in the news. Within these three categories women were overshadowed by men. CCC's Fadzai Mahere was the most prominent spokesperson featured in the media.

Fig 8: Distribution of coverage amongst political actors by gender



N.B. Even though women party leaders were featured, the coverage was negligible

Conclusion and Recommendations

In Week 3, prospective candidates' campaigns were overshadowed by their parent parties' broader principles which were articulated by party leaders and their spokespersons. There was a reduction in the number of political parties that found space and time in print and broadcast media channels, therefore diversity remains a cause for concern. The representation of women political actors decreased from the second week of monitoring, signalling a continued trend of male dominance in the coverage of elections.

In light of these recommendations, Media Monitors makes the following recommendations:

- The Media is encouraged to ensure fair and equitable representation of women contesting in the by-elections in order to counter the perennial trend of male dominance in election reporting.
- ZEC should ensure the local media gives equitable, fair and balanced coverage to all political parties and actors contesting in the elections through constant monitoring of the media's performance and regularly engaging the media to take corrective action.

Annex 1: Political Parties Contesting the Election

APP -All People's Party

CCC -Citizens Coalition for Change

DOP -Democratic Opposition Party

FAS - Federation of African States

FREEZIM - Free Zimbabwe Congress

LEAD -Labour, Economists and African Democrats

MA'AT ZIM - MA'AT Zimbabwe

MDC-A - Movement for Democratic Change Alliance -

NPF - New Patriotic Front

PZ -Patriotic Zimbabweans

RPZ -Republican Party of Zimbabwe

UDA- United Democratic Alliance

UZA- United Zimbabwe Alliance

ZANU PF - Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front

ZAPU - Zimbabwe African People's Union

ZLP - Zimbabwe Labour Party

Annex 2: Space and Time allocated to the monitored political actors on March 15-21, 2022

Actor	Party Affiliation	Role in Election	ZBC	Nat Comm Radio	Provincial Radio Station	Govt Controlled Newspapers	Privately Owned Newspapers
			Time in Secs	Time in Secs	Time in Secs	Space in cm ²	Space in cm ²
Chisasa Marvellous	Zanu PF	Local Authority	46	-			
Gomba Herbet	CCC	Local Authority	1				
Madamombe Fatima	MDC A	Local Authority	48				
Mlotshwa Bekithemba	Zanu PF	Local Authority				1	
Moyo Ntando	Zanu PF	Local Authority				1	
Munangaidzwa Trust	Zanu PF	Local Authority				435	
Mundembe Resistance	Zanu PF	Local Authority				434	
Munyamana Lovemore	Zanu PF	Local Authority				96	
Musanka Kudakwashe Mavula	Zanu PF	Local Authority				187	
Mutasa Tonderai	Zanu PF	Local Authority				1	
Mutengo Archiford	Zanu PF	Local Authority				695	
Ndlovu Alderman David	Zanu PF	Local Authority				437	
Ndlovu Bongani	Zanu PF	Local Authority				1	
Nhambu Betty	Zanu PF	Local Authority	140				
Nsingo Pumulani	Zanu PF	Local Authority				1	

Chidziva Happymore	CCC	National Assembly		2			
Chigaro Josphat	MDC A	National Assembly			1		
Chikombo Wellington	CCC	National Assembly	8				
Chipetu Charles	MDC A	National Assembly			1		
Chiwetu Jeremiah	Zanu PF	National Assembly	17				
Gumbo Mavis	Zanu PF	National Assembly	53				
Hove Simon	MDC A	National Assembly		1319			
Hungwe Tasara	Zanu PF	National Assembly	1				
Juta Emmanuel	Zanu PF	National Assembly		719			
Kamuzonda Roki	CCC	National Assembly					108
Mabhande Israel	MDC A	National Assembly	31				
Magaya Crispen	Zanu PF	National Assembly	38				
Makari Zalera	Zanu PF	National Assembly	97				
Mandaza Moses	ZLP	National Assembly	44				
Masvisvi Davison	Zanu PF	National Assembly	24				
Mateveke Ignatious	Zanu PF	National Assembly					1
Mlambo Garikayi	Zanu PF	National Assembly		99			
Mudzviti Taurai	Zanu PF	National Assembly					120

Mupfumi Esau	Zanu PF	National Assembly					
Mutegwe Licius	CCC	National Assembly	2				
Nyathi Bekithemba	CCC	National Assembly			1		
Rekai Edward	MDC A	National Assembly	1				
Rungware Munetsi	MDC A	National Assembly			1		
Sikhala Job	CCC	National Assembly					
Tasarirehamo Thomas	MDC A	National Assembly	60				
Vakai Edward	MDC A	National Assembly	1				
Vembo Tarusenga	MDC A	National Assembly					112
Zihapa Malvern	FAS	National Assembly	1				
Zizhou Munyaradzi	Zanu PF	National Assembly	50				
Chamisa Nelson	CCC	Party Leader					1404
Mnangagwa Emmerson	Zanu PF	Party Leader	610		115		246
Munyanduri Peter	NPF	Party Leader	487				
Mwonzora Douglas	MDC A	Party Leader		1			71
Valeri Elizabeth	UZA	Party Leader	60				
Mahere Fadzayi	CCC	Spokesperson					358
Mutsvangwa Christopher	Zanu PF	Spokesperson					6

Annex 3: Media Set Monitored

Government Controlled Newspapers	National Commercial Radio
The Herald	Star FM
Chronicle	Zi FM
Sunday News	Provincial Radio Stations
Sunday Mail	
The Manica Post	
Privately Owned Newspapers	Skyz Metro
Daily News	ZBC
Newsday	
The Standard	ZTV
Zimbabwe Independent	Radio Zimbabwe
The Mirror	Classic 263
Tell Zimbabwe	