



Concept paper on

COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS IN ZIMBABWE

1. INTRODUCTION

With the collapse of political colonisation and physical annexing of countries, a new kind of imperialism has emerged. This kind of imperialism is called media and culture imperialism and has become the new theatre for political and economic warfare.

Globalisation, coupled with varying financial dominance and the unending desire by the West to continue controlling third world countries has created this concept of media and cultural imperialism, which has hugely impacted today's world.

It is argued that although the means of exercising domination may have changed since the collapse of colonialism, the desire by powerful western countries remains much the same. The Western powers have created more subtle means of imperialism like media and cultural imperialism with equally devastating effects.

Media imperialism can be defined as a progression where the arrangement, ownership, allocation and the actual content of the media in a specific country can be influenced by external pressures from the content of the media in other countries without the same response of influence from the country that is affected. Through

media imperialism, the West can control the national narrative in Zimbabwe.

This concept is propagated by the understanding that there is a gross imbalance in the flow of communication between the first world (the core) and the third world countries (the periphery). The imperial first world will always seek to control the national narrative of third world countries to protect their exploitative endeavours.

Media imperialism can however be taken advantage of if practised by the State on the media in its country. This is when Government controls media through legislation and ownership.

An age old study posits that there are four key facets that influence society. These were later called estates. These estates were the Aristocracy, Clergy, The commoner and The Press. Then in modern day governance, the estates were modified to represent pillars of democracy. The modern day estates of democracy are the Executive, Legislature, Judiciary and Media/Press. No matter the model, clearly this puts media as one of the four key influencers of society.

Therefore it is very important that ZANU PF controls and/or influences the media in Zimbabwe in order to remain in power.

2. BACKGROUND

From independence, Government maintained a firm grip on media in Zimbabwe through favourable legislation like the Law and Order Maintenance Act and the Censorship and Control of Entertainments Act (Chapter 78) among others. It was until March 1999 that the Daily News was launched that proponents of regime change started finding a voice. Subsequently in 2001, the Broadcasting Services Act was enacted. This Act provided a platform for the creation of private and opposition media.

In order to consolidate our grip on media, we strengthened our legislation by enacting the Public Order and Security Act of 2002 (POSA) and the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA). This did not silence the opposition malcontents, as

they moved to provoke the state by going against said legislation and then misrepresent in the Daily News to gain traction with their funders. The situation escalated beyond control and became a concern for national security.

Anti establishment forces have from the onset fought our media laws in an attempt to weaken them by portraying them as draconian, but we have remained resolute in defence of our revolution. However, as we implement various reforms, we have repealed some of the laws. In January 2008 we amended the Broadcasting Services Act and repealed a greater section that offered control on broadcasting licences.

New laws like the Maintenance of Peace and Order Act (MOPA) (CHAPTER 11:23), the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), the Zimbabwe Media Commission Act (ZMC) and the Protection of Personal Information and Data Protection Act are being introduced to replace the repealed laws. These Acts are expected to liberalise the airwaves.

In that vein, Government has moved to open the airwaves to public players. The opening of the airwaves is a development that ZANU PF must be interested in and take control of. Failure of which we lose control of the national narrative.

3. IMPACT OF COMMUNITY RADIOS

It must be noted that the neo-colonialists have occupied all media spaces including social media. However radio still remains key especially among our traditional rural base.

An overview of the Zimbabwe media landscape shows that radio still remains the biggest and main source of news and information. Its reach in homesteads is wide, far stretching into the rural communities. Furthermore radio can now be accessed in motor vehicles, online and even directly on mobile cellphones without internet, thus further increasing its accessibility and reach.

A further study into radio stations reveals that of all types, community radio stations have more impact due to a number of factors.

Community radios are considered to be an intervention strategy of choice for deepening community participation and ownership. They are more favoured by the so called proponents of democracy as they argue that community radios give voices to the voiceless.

OWNERSHIP

Community radios are distinct from other forms of broadcasting in that they are non-profit services and are owned and managed by the community either through a trust or a foundation. Because of this sense of ownership among community members, community radio stations tend to be more influential than national radio stations. Community radio stations are also cheaper to run compared to other types of radios as they are manned predominantly by volunteers.

PROGRAMMING

Since these radio stations are within the community, they have a better understanding of the needs and interests of the particular communities that they operate in. Unlike national radio stations that deal with national issues, programs for community radio stations are localised and deal with specific issues that a community will be going through. For example if a community has problems with water or wild animals, discussions on the radio will revolve around those issues and this tends to get everyone interested as the issues will be impacting directly on their lives. Even on entertainment, community radio stations tend to promote local talent that may not get a chance on national radios. This creates a sense of belonging among community members and works as a pull factor towards the community radio station.

LANGUAGE

Ever since the constitution of Zimbabwe recognised 16 official languages, the national broadcaster has tried to create programs in different indigenous languages. However, English, Shona and Ndebele continue to dominate the airwaves. On the other hand, community radio stations predominantly use the local language of the community. This gives community radio stations an advantage in that everyone in the community can follow, understand and contribute with ease on every program.

RURAL FOCUS

All the 10 community radio stations that are earmarked to be licensed are rural based. Our rural population have no access to some other mediums of broadcasting. Hence community radio stations have a huge following in rural areas.

NETWORK REACH

Community radio stations in Zimbabwe will broadcast over a 40km radius per booster. Larger areas of coverage will have more than one booster per community radio station . For example the community radio station that will cover the Tonga language will have 5 boosters. This is enough network reach to cover more than one district per station.

This scenario gives a community radio station better reception in most districts than any national radio station. Our radio stations don't cover the whole of the country. National Fm has a better network reach than any national radio station, however it may not equal the network reach of a community radio station in most districts.

4. STRATEGIC POLITICAL CONTEXT

Media and politics are different entities with distinct aims, however, both depend on each other. Politics use media to be known by the public and to advertise their campaigns while media needs politics

to inform the public by giving visibility to politics. Media and politics work together and even though they are different, both impact each other as politics need media to provide a good image.

While it is illegal for a political party to own a community radio station directly, it is very possible for a political party to control the station through third parties.

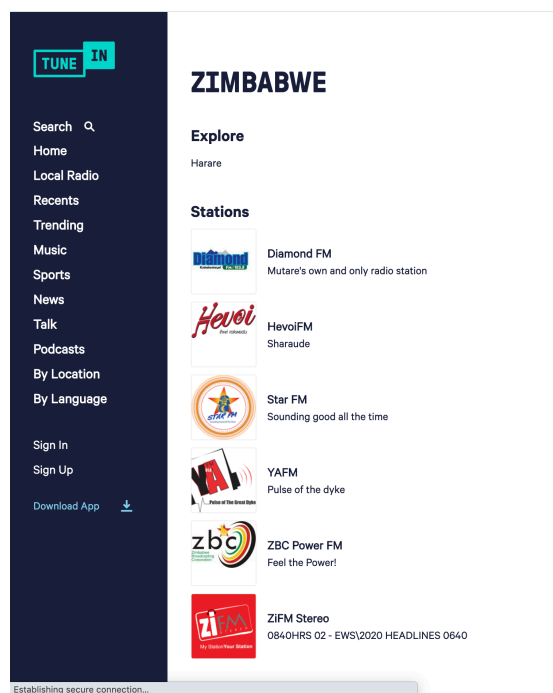
Current regulations on community radio stations prohibit the discussion of politics but political talk is not always direct. A discussion on shortage of basic amenities has a bearing on the service providers that are political. Political talk can happen without mention of political parties. The name government will be used to indirect mean the ruling ZANU PF. In this case, the law won't be able to regulate political talk.

5. TECHNOLOGICAL CONTEXT

While the country has moved on with technological advancement that has seen most of the population migrating from traditional mainstream mediums of communication to social media, radio has also adapted and moved with times. Radio can be found online and on social media sites like facebook. Radio stations like Nehanda Radio and Studio 7 are found online spewing anti-ZANU PF propaganda.

There are several online applications for computers and cellphone where one can tune in and access radio, for example, the Tune In application shown below:

Table 1 - Application for Online radio streaming



Secondly radio remains accessible on traditional radio sets, directly on cellphones and even on satellite decoders.

5. CURRENT STATE OF RADIOS IN ZIMBABWE

From independence, the country has managed to control the national narrative on radio by maintaining control on the licensing of broadcasting services. However, pursuant to the enactment of the Broadcasting Services Act of 2001 and the subsequent amendments of the same Act in 2008, it became inevitable that new players would be introduced into the broadcasting sphere.

COMMERCIAL RADIO STATIONS

In 2012, the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) licensed two commercial national stations, Star Fm owned by Zimpapers and Zifm owned by AB Communications. The initial arrangement was for ZANU PF to have a controlling stake in Zifm, however at registration, the Party now only owns 15% of the radio station, with the company owned by Hon Supa Mandiwanzira having a controlling 85% stake.

In 2015, BAZ licensed a further 10 commercial stations to bring the number to 12. These new commercial stations were at first mistaken for community radio stations since their broadcasting range was limited to a radius of 100km. However the ownership structures of these stations disqualifies them from being community radio stations. These were Nyaminyami Fm of Kariba, Diamond Fm of Manicaland, Hevoi Fm of Masvingo, Breeze Fm of Victoria Falls, Skyz Metro of Bulawayo, Khulumani Fm of Bulawayo, Central Fm of Gweru, YAFM of Zvishavane, Capitalk Fm of Harare and 98.4 Midlands of Gweru.

Those fronting the regime change agenda like the Media Institute for Southern Africa (MISA) led a public outcry for community radio stations, arguing that the licensed stations did not meet the required attributes of a community radio station.

COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS

On 20 February 2020, Government through BAZ invited applications for six national commercial television stations, 10 community radio stations and 19 campus radio stations. The campus radio stations will be awarded to tertiary institutions. This invitation was gazetted in the Government Gazette of 21 February 2020.

BAZ gazetted regulations to govern applications for the new broadcasting services licenses that include community radio stations. These guidelines are stringent and can only be achieved by an organised and well funded entity.

The current deadline for submission of these applications is **31 July 2020**

The following areas are earmarked to receive the initial 10 community radio licences based on the languages spoken there:

Table 2 - List of areas to receive community radio licenses.

LICENSE	LANGUAGE	AREAS COVERED
1	TONGA	Binga, Kamativi, Siabuwa, Kariba, Mapengula
2	NDAU	Chimanimani, Chipinge, Gwendingwe, Chibuwe, Rusitu
3	SHANGANI	Chiredzi, Chikombedzi, Malipati, Mahenye
4	BARWE	Nyanga, Mutoko, Rukotso, Susamoya
5	KALANGA & KHOISAN	Plumtree, Ndolwane, Mapisa, Empandeni
6	XHOSA	Umguza, Mbembesi
7	VENDA	Beitbridge, Shashi
8	TSWANA & SOTHO	Manama, Legion
9	NAMBYA	Hwange, Victoria Falls
10	CHEWA	Shamva, Alaska

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICATION

In terms of the Broadcasting Services Act the following is required;

- a) Applicant must be a body corporate with a controlling interest of the company, association or otherwise being held by one or more persons who are citizens of Zimbabwe and the majority of the persons who determine policies of the company or manage the day to day operations of the broadcasting service should also be citizens of Zimbabwe.
- b) Applicant to provide certified copies of the following;
 - certificate of incorporation/ constitution / deed;
 - where applicable the latest CR14 form;
 - where applicable the memorandum and articles of association;
 - copies of Shareholders/members/ Trustees national

identification;

- copies of national identification of the Directors, CEO and senior managers to be involved in the project.

c) Political parties and organisations do not qualify to be licensed (Section 20).

- d) No person other than a citizen of Zimbabwe shall be a Director of a licensee (Section 22).
- e) Applicant's broadcasting service should not be wholly or partly funded by foreign donations or contributions;
- f) Applicant to provide proof and particulars of source of funding.
- g) Applicant should not be a subsidiary company or whose broadcasting service is provided as agent of or under a franchise from another person.
- h) Applicant should not have been convicted of an offence in terms of the Broadcasting Services Act [Ch 12:06], the Postal and Telecommunications Act [Ch12:05] or the Radiocommunications Services Act [Ch 12:04] before its repeal by the Postal and Telecommunications Act [Ch 12:05]. The Applicant or any of its Directors should not have been convicted of an offence in or outside Zimbabwe and imprisoned for more than six months without the option of a fine;
- i) Applicant and all of its Directors should provide police clearance and affidavit declaring the same.
- j) Applicant or any of its Directors should not have been declared insolvent, bankrupt, rehabilitated or discharged, made an assignment to, or arrangement or composition with his creditors which has not been rescinded or set aside;

- k) Applicant and all of its Directors to provide affidavit declaring that they do not fall within this category.
- l) Procedure in terms of section 10 of the Broadcasting Services Act [Chapter 12:06];
- m) Applicants should only apply for a licence to provide the broadcasting service specified in the notice published by the Authority. The Authority will not consider applications for any other classes of service.
- n) Applicants should submit their applications in the format prescribed by the Authority's BS1 application form by the deadline set.

4. ZANU PF CONTEXT

The 2023 elections will be issue based. Bread and butter issues will dominate talking points and electoral debates. The country is currently facing multifaceted economic challenges. These challenges are mainly artificial and part of the broader scheme by negative forces in pursuit of the regime change agenda. We all know that the country has been at war for almost two decades now in the form of illegal sanctions and economic saboteurs. This battle entered another phase, this time confronting a renewed ZANU PF government that is genuinely pursuing transformative national objectives for the people.

In essence, ZANU PF is confronted with war on two fronts; the economic and media fronts with the latter being most lethal. Media is used to create negative perception of government policies hence killing public and investor confidence. It follows that whoever controls the media will have an upper hand in the 2023 plebiscite. Therefore the 2023 elections, while being issue based, will be decided by information, communication and publicity.

Since the period prior to the July 2018 harmonised polls, we have experienced a proliferation of negative media coverage against the

party and government. Attacks on the party and government have become incessant. A lot of online media houses have sprouted. Most of these are pirate unlicensed media houses. Some of them look to license when Government starts issuing private broadcasting licenses while others intend to continue operating clandestinely.

In 2003, through grants from the American Embassy controlled funders, the Zimbabwe Association of Community Radio Stations (ZACRAS) was established. This entity has organised, trained and funded opposition aligned community members to advocate for and eventually run community radio stations. ZACRAS has planted its member organisations all across Zimbabwe, for example Twasumpuka Fm in Binga and Hwange Fm in Hwange.

Through ZACRAS, the regime change fronting opposition has been preparing for community radio stations since 2003 and their members are much more prepared for this development than ZANU PF members.

If a community radio station is controlled by the opposition, then they will ensure that all the works of their MPs and councillors are always publicised. They will introduce programs that will talk about economic hardships and lack of service delivery. Through these programs, they will indirectly psyche the voters to believe that the ZANU PF government is failing.

On the other hand, if a community radio station is controlled by ZANU PF, it will be a platform to articulate all the achievements by the New Dispensation as led by His Excellency President Emmerson Mnangagwa and inculcate patriotism and public support for the ZANU PF policies. A ZANU PF controlled community radio station will articulate vision 2030 and break down Devolution into terms understood by the local communities.

CASE STUDY

CASE OF THE TONGA LICENSE

The community radio station allocated for the Tonga language will cover Binga District, Kamativi in Hwange District, Kariba District and Mapengula in Siakobvu. This area alone represents about six constituencies and an estimated 57 wards.

Taking an area like Binga for example; According to the last population census, the total population of the District is 139 092 of which 54% (75 356 are females) and 46% (63 736 are males). The district has an approximated total area of 13 028 km².

The district has two constituencies of which both are controlled by the MDC Alliance. Of the 25 wards in Binga, 24 are controlled by the MDC Alliance and only 1 belongs to ZANU PF.

So far in Binga, only one group of people has applied. These are called Twasumpuka Fm and were created by ZACRAS. A quick check on the ZACRAS website can reveal some of the groups under their wing, although of late there has been attempts by ZACRAS to remove some of the groups that applied for licenses from their websites.

Table 3 - List of ZACRAS members

The screenshot shows the ZACRAS website's 'MEMBERS' page. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for HOME, ABOUT US, MEMBERSHIP, WHAT WE DO, NEWS, and CONTACT US. Below the navigation is a large yellow banner with the word 'MEMBERS' in white. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column is titled 'Current Membership' and contains a list of 20 community radio stations, each with a green arrow pointing right. The first station, '41 FM', is highlighted in light green and has a dropdown arrow. Below the list, there is a detailed description for '41 FM'. The right column is titled 'Become a Member' and contains two yellow buttons: 'How to Become a Member' and 'Apply for Membership'.

Station Name	Action
41 FM	▼
Berina FM	>
CORAH FM	>
Hwange FM	>
Kwelaz FM	>
Nkabezwe FM	>
Ntepe FM	>
Patsaka NyamiNyami FM	>
Radio Chiedza	>
Radio Dialogue	>
Twasumpuka FM	>
Wezhira Community Radio Station	>
Y-Star FM	>
Zhowane FM	>
Getjenge FM	>
VeMuganga FM	>
Budja FM	>
Goromonzi FM	>
Nkayi FM	>
Tsakani FM	>
Kumakomo	>

41 FM - is a rural based community radio station in the southern part of Zimbabwe (Matebeleland North). Its aim is to spur development in communities around Jotsholo through promoting the sharing of useful information amongst community members (women, young people, the disabled, Children, the elderly, and people living with HIV/AIDS)

Become a Member

- [How to Become a Member](#)
- [Apply for Membership](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ZANU PF realises the need to utilise modern communication resources in this Information age. Therefore there is need to constantly devise creative approaches to communication as opposed to mainstream communication channels, in order to reach all sections of the population. In this instance, community radio stations are a critical medium that must not be ignored. It is critical for ZANU PF to control all community radio stations.
- A Taskforce team must be set that will go around the earmarked districts and covertly organise the ZANU PF

aligned community members to apply for the available licenses

- c) The current process of allocation of licenses must be delayed to allow for ZANU PF to put in place all the required logistics to take control of the process.
- d) ZANU PF must covertly fund the application processes because the exorbitant application fees are prohibitive to ordinary community members

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