



MISA-Zimbabwe Monthly Alerts Digest June 2011

Broadcasting Reforms on the Agenda: Free the Airwaves Now!

1. In this Issue: Priority should be given to community radios: *By David Makacha*

There is great anticipation that the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation's decades old monopoly of the airwaves could come to an end following the submission of 15 applications for licenses by prospective private commercial radio stations.

The sincerity of the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) will thus be severely tested this time around given that no licenses have ever been issued for private television and radio stations since the enactment of the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA) in 2001.

This development has heightened demands for BAZ to equally call for applications for community radio station licenses in compliance with the African Charter on Broadcasting's three-tier broadcasting system and as provided for under the BSA. There are several Community Radio Initiatives that are ready to broadcast once they are granted such licenses notably Radio Dialogue in Bulawayo and Community Radio Harare.

While all the three tiers of broadcasting namely, commercial, community and public broadcasting are desirable, equal priority should be given for community radios especially in Zimbabwe to enable communities to access and share information on issues affecting their respective communities.

Unlike commercial radio stations, which are profit-driven and market-segmented in terms of their programming, community broadcasting is broadcasting by the community for the community. The ownership and management of a community radio station is representative of the community, which determines and sets its own programming based on its socio-economic needs and is not profit driven.

While this does not necessarily mean community radios operate at a loss, the point to note is that they are not established for the purpose of making profit. This means that their programming is not saturated by adverts, state propaganda or elitist ideas. Community radios are designed to promote values of the community, pursuing the social, economic and political agendas of the community, which may be defined geographically or by common interests.

If prioritised, community radios can empower marginalised communities to define and manage their own development. They are particularly vital in promoting minority languages and cultures, which have been ignored by the mainstream

media for a long time. It is high time communities were given their own voice by establishing their own community radios.

While the sole state controlled broadcaster claims to be promoting minority languages through its National FM station, it is important to note that it does not reach the intended audiences. Areas such as Binga, Hwange, Kariba, Chimanimani and Dete where such languages as Nambiya, Tonga, Nyanja, Ndau and Venda are spoken do not receive ZBC signals. In essence the same audiences that receive programmes in Shona, English and isiNdebele are the same people who are receiving the signals meant for the marginalised ethnic groups.

Community radios regardless of whether they are urban or rurally based address their intended audiences not simply as citizens or consumers of information, but as participants in the shared interests of the respective communities. They have the ability to work towards social inclusion, and this is one of the most strong arguments in favour of the establishment of community radio stations.

Lessons can be drawn from neighbouring states such as South Africa and Mozambique. In South Africa they have more than 100 community radio stations, which have helped to promote the native languages of ethnic minorities.

In Mozambique, *Erive Community Radio*, in Maganja Da Costa District has been used to disseminate information on health, education HIV and AIDS throughout the district resulting in gradual change in people's behaviour. Notable changes include an increase in school enrolment and a decline in disease outbreaks HIV and AIDS infections.

The same results can also be realised in Zimbabwe if community radios are established.

As the nation waits for the outcome of BAZ's call for commercial radios licenses, it goes without saying that the establishment of community radio stations in Zimbabwe is long overdue.

End
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2. Violations statistics June 2011

Victim/Concerned Party	Violation/Event/Issue	Date	Status Of the Matter
The Masvingo Mirror	The weekly publication was ransacked by unknown criminals who broke into its offices and tampered with computers and laptops before stealing a memory card from an editorial camera.	15-June 2011	Nothing has come out from Police investigations yet.
Nevanji Madanhire, Patience Nyangove, Editor and journalist with the private weekly, <i>The Standard</i> and Loud Ramakgapola- company representative	The trio was arrested in connection with the publication of a story carried in the edition of June 26 – July 2, 2011 titled: " <i>MDC-T fears for missing Timba</i> ". They are being charged with criminal defamation under section 96 of the Criminal Law	29 June 2011	They were released on bail conditions as the police sought to proceed by way of summons

Codification and Reform Act and section 31 which criminalises the publishing or communication of false statements prejudicial to the State and statements " <i>undermining public confidence in a law enforcement agency</i> '	
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