Media & Information Habits, Consumption and Perception in Zimbabwe

Consolidated Final Report

8 December 2019

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Acronyms

AIPPA   Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA)
BBC   British Broadcasting Corporation
CPU   Civil Protection Unit
EA   Enumeration Area
FGD   Focus Group Discussion
IMS   International Media Support
KII   Key Informant Interview
ODK   Open Data Kit
RBZ   Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe
SABC   South Africa Broadcasting Corporation
TV   Television
USD   United States Dollar
VOP   Voice of the People
VPN   Virtual Private Network
ZBC   Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation
ZEC   Zimbabwe Electoral Commission

Definition of Key Terms

Internet based news stations: Internet based news refers to stations or news companies that share their news content through websites.

Newspapers: A printed publication (usually issued daily or weekly) consisting of folded unstapled sheets and containing news, articles, advertisements, and correspondence.

Social Media: Social media refers to websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. These include Whatsapp, Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, Pintrest and so on.

Peers: Refers to information or news passed through word of mouth in informal conversations during social gatherings, commuting, household chores fetching water etc., informal meetings and so on

Executive Summary

Background

The Media and Information Habits, Consumption and Perceptions survey sought to understand six key issues: 1) News media habits of Zimbabweans; 2) News concept of Zimbabweans (what news is to the individual); 3) Public trust levels in the media; 4) Perception and understanding of key developmental issues; 5) Media and information literacy levels of Zimbabweans; and 6) Participation in relevant key issues through media (by women, men, boys and girls).

Methodology

Mixed methods were used to collect data that provides evidence on trends on these six key issues in all ten provinces of Zimbabwe. For the quantitative survey a sample size of 1,500 households was found sufficient at 2.53% margin of error, 95% confidence level with a conservative response distribution of 50% and a design effect of 3 to address intra-cluster correlation. In each household an adult (25 years and above) and a young person (19-24 years) was interviewed. The sample size was split equally between male and females in each age group. A total sample size of 2,943 interviews was reached.

For the qualitative survey, 54 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) in all provinces and ten Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted at national level.

Findings

News concept of Zimbabweans
1. The concept of 'news' is interpreted differently by people of different gender and age living in different locations. Regardless, there are also ample areas of commonality across social strata.
    1.1. However, rural adults had the most diverse views about news.
    1.2. Words most frequently associated with news were politics, economy, prices, and the President.
2. The media sector is insufficiently diverse content-wise to meet the needs of consumers.
    2.1. Lack of diversity in the media is a result of multiple factors and drivers.
    2.2. Individual consumers' motivation to access preferred media, including through external sources, reduces their demand for the national broadcaster to deliver news that meets their need.
    2.3. The media sector in Zimbabwe is highly politicised and polarised
    2.4. Despite government commitment to media reform practitioners report growing securitisation of the media and this undermines press freedom and diversity in reporting
3. The effectiveness of the media is a function of its capacity to respond to the news and information needs of its consumers.
4. News was considered news worthy if: 1) it adds value; 2) shared at the right time and people expect to hear it; 3) it contains balanced analysis; 4) free of grammatical errors; 5) well evidenced; 6) it addresses local issues; 7) it is truthful; and 8) informs the public on things that affect them.

News Media Habits of Zimbabweans
5. 65% of respondents had access to more than one source of news.
6. Location, education level, and wealth status influence the number of news sources one has access to with those without education, in rural areas and in the lowest wealth quintile with having only one source of news.
7. In order of most used: Radio (58%), Social Media platforms (38.4%), TV (21.5%), Peers (6.8%), and Newspapers (6.0%) were the most used.

8. However, when the main source of news is considered the trend changes: Radio (45.2%) remains the main source, while Peers increase to 24.7%, Social Media reduces to 15.3% and TV to 10.0%.
9. There are significant differences in media consumption by men, women and youth in urban and rural settings
   9.1. Adult male and young men have access to more news sources than adult women and young women.
   9.2. In order of most mentioned important factor, Ease of access, Reputation and Cost, where the main determinants of which sources to use
10. The barriers to access news can be summarised as follows:

Rural Areas
- Distance to source of news
- Cost of accessing news
- Network challenges
- Language of news
- Multiple use of newspapers (limit sharing)
- Limited awareness of social media

Urban Areas
- Cost of accessing news
- Power outages
- Trend towards bite size – on the go news
- Poor quality programing
- Competing interests between current affairs and entertainment
- Concern of addiction to social media
- Fear of fake news

11. The Zimbabwean news media are generally considered to be doing an average to below average job because of:
    11.1. too much focus on Harare
    11.2. partisan bias reporting across state and private media
    11.3. limited research, fact checking and retractions
    11.4. irrelevant stories
    11.5. too much focus on gossip and rumours
    11.6. low poor capacity to communicate subjects of a technical nature to non-technical consumers
    11.7. Journalists are not doing enough to monitor and scrutinise powerful people and businesses

Public Trust Level in Media
12. The general trend in the data shows that a majority of consumers of news view their news sources as not credible with less than 50% of respondents across all sources expressing trust of their main news and information source.
13. Poor quality journalism is blamed for last trust levels:
    13.1. The pursuit for breaking news is undermining the quality of reporting with some journalists downplaying fact checking and verification prior to publication.
    13.2. Trust of the media may be undermined by its failure to prevent a humanitarian situation e.g. the failure of the media on Cyclone Idai.
    13.3. Politicisation of the media and allegations of corruption among journalists (journalists being paid to write certain stories).
14. Government is complicit in the construction of a culture of fake news as respondents observed that government seldom clarifies conflicting messages.

Perceptions and Understanding of Key Development Issues

15. A majority of respondents (75.3%) have no specific news of interest to them and consume what is supplied by the various media sources they have access to.
    15.1. The highest numbers of people with no specific topic were in Matabeleland districts, Tsholotsho (97.3%), Bulilima (89.4%), Lupane (98.7%), and Bulawayo (98%).
16. For those with some interest in news:
    16.1. 56.5% were interested most in news about the economy, followed by weather and climate change (37.9%), Politics (37.4%) and Government Performance (23%).
    16.2. For youths, the economy (53.3%), politics (36.1%), and weather and climate change (31.5%) are the most interesting to them.
17. However these news topics were considered insufficiently covered for the following reasons:
    17.1. Capacity gaps exists on reporting on technical areas among media practitioners.
    17.2. Delivery of quality journalism is constrained by several factors operating at multiple scales, from the individual through to the macro-economy.

Media and Information Literacy of Zimbabweans

18. 65.9% of the respondents, mentioned that they have consumed or come across news/information they perceived as false/inaccurate.
19. Asked on the action taken upon identification of news/ information they regard as false, 54.3% reported that they ignored it, 32.9% shared with a friend and only 12.5% said they verify with other sources.
    19.1. More youths (73.6%) than adults (64.2%) mentioned that they verified news identified as false/inaccurate using other sources (excluding peers), and more urban residents than rural verify news with other sources
20. In general age, gender, education and location appear to have some association with respondents' self-rated ability to detect fake news.
21. Despite positive appraisal of respondent capacity to detect fake news there is recognition that the process of assessing news is unclear and it is difficult to arrive at an accurate conclusion.
22. Multiple approaches are used to determine authenticity of news, but these vary in efficacy including: a) analysis of grammatical and syntax structure of sentences; b) waiting which involves delaying the judgement on whether news received is fake or genuine until the event occurs; c) Use different media for triangulation; d) Link to a functional reference e.g. a letter without an official letterhead and signature is highly likely to be discarded as being fake; e) verify with trusted individuals; and f) rely on eye witness accounts.
23. Media houses, through use of sensationalist headlines, are complicit in the spread of fake news.
24. There is an indirect effect of 'no comment' and unilateral reporting on reliability of news.
25. The prevalence of falsehoods in the media is perpetuating the narrative that all news is fake, it all depends on your perspective.
26. There is no awareness of institutions or platforms for fact checking news and information.
27. There are significant individual costs associated with fake news in the media.

Participation in Relevant Key Issues through Media

28. Communities targeted in this baseline survey have peripheral to no previous experience of participating in CSO driven community voice initiatives.
    28.1. Citizen voice is weak and lacking in many communities as platforms for participation and engagement are poorly developed.
    28.2. There is willingness to participate in development debates but the resources, platforms and leadership for this is often inadequate.
    28.3. Social media platforms are well-organised and may be guided through written rules for participation.
    28.4. Respondents engage in different debates on different media platforms.
    28.5. Access to mobile phones is a key enabler for participation.

29. Women experience multiple barriers to participation in debates on key development issues.
    29.1.   Platforms for women to engage exist but are limited in accessibility.
    29.2.   Gender mainstreaming in community development is a key gap which undermines role of women, youth (male and female) in community development.
30. For youth:
    30.1.   Social norms and value systems appear to constrain communities from recognising and engaging youth in development process.
    30.2.   There is a lack of sufficient institutions for developing leadership skills especially for youths.

Conclusion

The main source of news for majority of respondents was radio. However, of those that get their news on radio, most do not consider it as a credible source. Amongst various possible reasons to explain why this is so, it is most plausible that respondents have limited choices with regard to accessing news and information, since, according to this survey, ease of access is cited as the most important factor in deciding main news or information sources. During times of crisis, it is evidenced that most respondents have limited sources of information, indicating that they tend to depend one source, and to a greater extent, peers only.

However, new media platforms, the internet and social media such as WhatsApp, are emerging as alternative sources of news and information. However, their use is limited by access to internet, costs associated with access, and the prevalence of fake news on these platforms. WhatsApp is a widely used social media platform and depended on during times of crises but with reservations on authenticity of information.

Majority of respondents have come across fake news but were unable to verify the news' credibility. Over 50% of those that have come across fake news were not able to verify the credibility of the news or they just ignored the circulating information.

The concept of news in Zimbabwe is narrow mainly influenced by the main narrative on the status of the country. This includes the economy, politics, prices and jobs.

There are opportunities to enhance participation. The emergence of social media shows provides avenues for organising participation and citizen voice.

1   Introduction

This report is the third of three deliverables for the Media and Information Habits, Consumption and Perception in Zimbabwe survey. It consolidates findings from the qualitative and quantitative survey.

2   Background

1.1   Objectives of the study

Fojo Media Institute (Fojo), International Media Support (IMS) and Internews are jointly implementing media development programmes in Zimbabwe between 2019 and 2021. The overall objective of the projects is informed citizens (women and men, girls and boys) freely participate, interact and contribute to democratic governance and development. The specific objective of the project is credible mainstream and alternative media enable and inform actions of marginalized communities in rural and urban areas promoting transparency, accountability and inclusion in close collaboration with civil society.

The projects seeks to achieve the following outcomes:

- **Outcome 1:** Information & communication gap narrowed in targeted marginalized rural and urban communities, with youth's and women's voices amplified and participation increased.
- **Outcome 2:** Targeted independent media and civil society are better able to elevate citizen voices to hold government accountable and provide high-quality public interest content with a balanced presence of women and men.
- **Outcome 3:** Citizen and rights centred media policy and law reform, and protection of safe journalistic working conditions, supported and enhanced.
- **Outcome 4:** Targeted independent media outlets show improved financial sustainability and business practice

2.1.1   Key questions of the study

Research Theme	Main research question:
1. News media habits of Zimbabweans	▪ Where do Zimbabweans get their news and information from? i.e. what options are available to them? ▪ What is the role of TV, radio, newspapers and social media in news and information flows in Zimbabwe?
2. News concept of Zimbabweans (what news is to the individual)	▪ What constitutes news for Zimbabweans? ▪ How do different groups define the term "news"? What is news to them?
3. Public trust levels in the media	▪ Which sources do Zimbabweans trust when they seek news and current affairs related information? ▪ Which sources provide citizens with information during crisis situations?
4. Perception and understanding of key developmental issues	▪ How do the audience prioritize key development issues? ▪ What issues are of priority to be covered in the media ▪ How do Zimbabweans view media coverage of key developmental issues i.e. *Climate change,*

Research Theme	Main research question:
	environment, health, gender, human rights, corruption and accountability? ▪ How do the audience value how the different media cover all the topics?
5. Media and information literacy levels of Zimbabweans	▪ How skilled are Zimbabweans when it comes to evaluating media content?
6. Participation in relevant key issues through media (by women, men, boys and girls)	▪ To what extent do women and men, girls and boys participate in debates through media? ▪ What are the barriers to women and men, girls' and boys' participation in debates on key development issues? ▪ To what extent do women and men, girls and boys participate in debates on key developmental issues? ▪ On what media platforms do these debates happen?

3 Study Approach and Methodology

3.1 Overall study design

The survey used a mixed method approach – providing quantitative evidence underpinned by an understanding of causal factors through primary qualitative data. The proposed sampling approach also supported inclusivity by ensuring the diverse socio-economic groups in the target communities are reached.

3.2 Quantitative survey

The section presents the methodology adopted in collecting quantitative data.

3.2.1 Tools and techniques

A combination of secondary and primary data collection was used to complete the required quantitative data. See Volume 2 of the report.

Secondary data review

A secondary data review process was undertaken guided by the questions from the Data Collection Framework. A combination of internet topic search and referrals from key informant interviews was used to identify relevant secondary literature.

Structured questionnaire

Primary quantitative data was collected through a structured questionnaire administered to men women (above 25 years) and young men and women (18-24 years old). The tool was administered face to face. Mobile based data collection, using ODK data mobile data collection, will be used instead of the traditional paper questionnaires to enhance data availability, quality control and supervision.

3.2.2 Sampling strategy and sample sizes

Determining survey area: Ten districts in eight provinces were purposively selected for the survey (See Table 1). A multi-stage stratified random sampling approach was then adopted to identify the location of the surveys. First selected districts were classified as rural and urban. From each district, two wards were randomly selected. From each ward two to three Enumeration Areas (EAs) were randomly selected based on the size of the EA. The selected survey area is presented in Table 1. In Harare and Bulawayo one urban poor ward and one urban rich ward were selected for the survey while the rural sample includes: communal lands, resettlement areas, commercial agriculture and mining areas. However the primary stratum remained the rural and urban strata.

Table 1: Selected survey area

Province	District	Selected Ward	Location (urban/Rural)	Selected EA
Manicaland	Chimanimani	4	Rural	101, 10,21
		7	Rural	51,81
Mashonaland East	Goromonzi	10	Rural	50,120,140
		15	Rural	21,50
	Mutoko	14	Urban	110,81 , 70
		20	Rural	220, 280

Province	District	Selected Ward	Location (urban/Rural)	Selected EA
Masvingo	Chiredzi	3	Urban	40, 61, 20
		4	Rural	20, 51
Midlands	Gweru Rural	3	Rural	120, 110, 150, 50, 90
	Gweru Urban	9	Urban	160, 150, 111, 71, 30
Mat North	Tsholotsho	22	Rural	70, 110, 120
		7	Rural	50, 69
	Lupane	15	Rural	29,70,90
		22	Rural	11,90
Mat south	Bulilima	7	Rural	10, 30, 70
		4	Rural	60, 70
Harare	Epworth	5	Urban (Poor)	320, 230, 60
	Chisipite	8	Urban (Rich)	90, 60
Bulawayo	Bulawayo	10	Urban (poor)	450, 700, 670, 510
		5	Urban (Rich)	120

Sampling size calculation: Considering the 2019 population projection in the selected districts and the 2012 census national average household size of 4.2, a sample size of 1500 households will give us a 2.53% margin of error at 95% confidence level and a conservative response distribution of 50%. However, considering that this is a multi-stage cluster sample, the sample size of 1500 household will guarantee us a design effect of at least 3 with a 5% margin of error and 95% confidence level, which gives us sufficient statistical significance for inferential analysis using the survey results.

The overall sample size of 1500 was distributed evenly across the selected districts. The district sample size of 150 was divided into cluster sample sizes of 30 so as to spread the sample giving 5 Enumeration Areas (EAs) in each selected district.

3.2.3   Data collection

Selected and trained enumerators visited selected areas as per set itinerary and administered face-to-face individual questionnaires with the selected respondents. Data was collected using tablets running on ODK mobile data collection software in all the selected 10 districts over a period of 17 days instead of the proposed 10 days. The extension of the data collection period was as a result of extended periods in conducting sensitisations and protocols at both Provincial and District levels. Also in the urban areas, notably Chisipite enumerators faced challenges with getting respondents as most of the residents in the area did not consent to participating in the survey. In some rural districts, finding youth respondents proved challenging. In addressing these hurdles, over-sampling was done, i.e. getting respondents from villages /communities outside the proposed enumeration areas.

A four layered quality control mechanism was employed. The first layer included the inbuilt quality control measures in the mobile data collection software. The second level included the supervisors tasked with undertaking: 1) back checks to verify the interviews took place and that the correct respondents were interviewed; 2) ensuring correct questioning and recording of responses during interview sit ins; and 3) ensuring the correct field procedure was undertaken. The third level included the daily data quality review by the Data Manager and feedback to the field teams through the supervisors. The fourth layer was having consultants accompany the field teams.

3.2.4 Data Management

Data quality was checked throughout the duration of the data collection process for consistency and any outliers by the statistician and project manager. This was done real time. Feedback was sent to the field teams through their respective Field supervisors. After data collection, data was checked and cleaned before analysis. . This process included the monitoring of achievement of targets, selection of survey respondents as well as ensuring that updates were sent timely.

3.2.5 Data analysis

Quantitative data analysis was guided by analysis tables to be developed from the pilot data. It included mainly descriptive statistics.

3.3 Qualitative Methods

The section present the methodology adopted in collecting qualitative data.

3.3.1 Tools and techniques

The consultant used a set of tools and techniques targeted at various stakeholders in the media sector as discussed below.

Review of secondary data
Global review of existing literature was done to obtain information on the policy environment and policies governing the media sector in Zimbabwe.

Focus Group Discussions
Focus groups discussions were used to get the views of community members including: men, women, young men and young women. In conducting these discussions, highly participatory techniques were and these included: ranking, scoring, blind voting; mind maps, and photo elicitation. Audio recorders were also used.

Key informant interviews
Semi structured face to face interviews were conducted with identified key stakeholders to understand the environment and context of media in Zimbabwe i.e. media policies and education that impact on media literacy of communities including factors that contribute to choice of sources of news and level of trust by communities. Key informants will be selected from the following categories: 1) media development organisations; and 2) media houses.

3.3.2 Sampling and sample sizes

The qualitative data will be restricted to two EAs and Six FGDs per district were conducted. FGDs were conducted with groups of men, women, young women and men (18-24) in two locations in each EA per district. Self-selection was used to identify respondents.

3.3.3 Data collection

A total number of 54 FGDs were conducted in the 10 districts, Table 2 shows the group discussions conducted. FGDs could not be conducted as planned in Chisipite where there was a very low response rate from the targeted population.

Table 2: Sample size

Group	Number of groups
Male Adults	11

Group	Number of groups
Female Adults	13
Female Youths	6
Male Youths	5
Mixed Adults	9
Mixed Youths	10
Total	**54**

3.3.4   Data entry cleaning and management

For the qualitative data collection, transcription templates for both the FGDs and KIIs were developed. Enumerators completed these at the end of the data collection process, audio recordings collected were also used to enhance accuracy of transcriptions. Consolidation of the transcripts was done in preparation for the data analysis.

3.3.5   Data analysis

Data transcriptions from FGDs were organized by thematic area with each theme being determined by the focus questions. Responses under each theme were synthesized and analysed to produce survey findings for each particular theme. For each finding, case studies/ examples were identified to further illuminate the issues in each EA of the survey. There were cases where questions could not be responded for reasons stated by respondents, no data was generated. Such questions were identified as those that seemed political in nature and uncomfortable for the respondents.

3.4   Study Limitations

- Section E (wealth status) of the Quantitative tool was administered in all districts except for Chiredzi district. The section was removed for that district after Provincial Administrator's office had reservations with its inclusion. Analysis of wealth status therefore excludes Chiredzi.
- Youths in some EAs were difficult to find due to competing activities. However, the combined sample of youths was achieved.
- The survey did not have room for self-administration to accommodate those in urban areas that could not participate in the face to face interviews. This challenge was particularly so in Chisipite. Although various strategies were put in place to mobilise respondents the target number of respondents were not met. However, this does not affect the urban sample size in total as the target number was met by oversampling in other urban areas.

4 Findings

This section presents the findings of the survey. It is structured according to the main objectives and research questions of the study. It begins with an assessment of the news concept for Zimbabweans followed by analysis of their news habits. Form this it details findings on public trust level in media followed by an assessment of the population's media literacy and perceptions of respondents on key developmental issues. The last section explores participation of respondents in relevant key issues through the media.

4.1 News Concept of Zimbabweans

The concept of 'news' is interpreted differently by people of different gender and age living in different locations. Regardless, there are also ample areas of commonality across social strata

Participants in focus group discussions were each asked to give one word or phrase that they associated with the term 'news'. Word clouds were subsequently constructed as visual representations to show the bunch of words identified by each demographic category (age group and geographic location) and their relative importance based on frequency with which that word was cited. The relative frequency (weight) associated with which each of these associated key words was shown by the size and density of the text as shown in **Figure 1.** Across all four categories considered in this analysis there appears to be strong association of news with politics and economy.

A. Rural adults

B. Rural youth

C. Urban adults

D. Urban youth
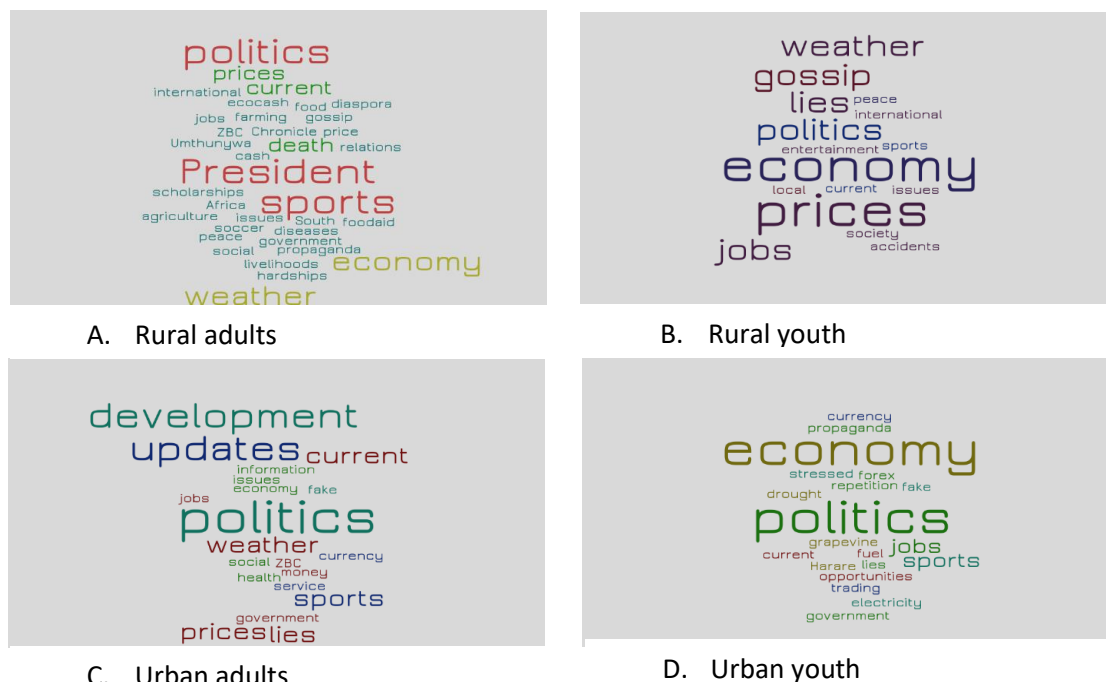
Figure 1: Words most frequently associated with 'news' for different age and location categories

Focus group participants were asked to describe the basis for their choice of word or phrase associated with the concept of news. Respondents noted that the media space in Zimbabwe was highly politicised and highly polarised and news through predominant channels, including the radio, television and print, were mostly of political nature and often along political party lines. Thus, their perception of news was heavily dependent on this exposure. Rural adults unpacked this dimension by pointing out that their experience with news was predominated by issues to do with the current president, *"Whenever you switch on the news there is always something on that has to do with the president. Always".* Also, in consideration of the protracted economic decline and government's efforts to

resuscitate the economy, respondents to this baseline survey reported associating news with reports on the economy, although the actual content seldom addressed the aspects that people were interested in hearing or reading about.

The weather report was also strongly associated with the idea of news, more so in rural areas given the direct reliance on rainfall for farming and significantly too in urban areas given the acute shortages of domestic water. Sport was also common and associated with male respondents. Respondents in urban areas reported that in recent years the unfavourable employment situation had pushed a lot of males into sports betting, hence the keen following of sports news to assist betting. While sports betting has significantly led to addiction, as reported by male youth in Bulawayo, there has been limited exploration of this phenomenon by the media and failures at government level to address this looming disaster.

Rural adults had the most diverse views about news

Drawing associations with their livelihoods as well as command agriculture and food aid. News was associated with media institutions such as the ZBC, SABC and CNN as well as with the development process. Some respondents were looking to the news for updates including with respect to Ecocash mobile money service, prices of basic commodities, and food prices. Other areas of convergence for all demographic groups included on jobs (raised because of the expectation that the government would create jobs) with urban youth associating news with economic opportunities (urban youth mostly). Apart from rural adults, all other categories of respondents to some extent associated news with propaganda, lies and gossip. Young urbanites associated news with narratives of stress, repetition especially in Harare. Such associations were premised on the belief that if change was to come to their lives then probably, they would hear of such through the news. Failure to receive such news had resulted in frustration. Those outside Harare felt that their communities were not receiving enough attention on the national stage due to the low decentralisation of government and the media sector and the perception that the media was only focusing on happenings in Harare.

The media sector in Zimbabwe is highly politicised and polarised

Respondents were concerned that the media was increasingly being placed at the frontline of political machinations, with state and private media being funded in ways that appear to promote specific political interest at the expense of fair and unbiased reporting. One respondent argued that because of this politicisation of the media one needed to read at least one private newspaper and balance this with at least one state-owned publication if they "wanted to approximate the truth on current affairs". Journalists were open to abuse by political interests due to such factors as low pay and a growing culture of non-compliance to set standards and ethics in the fraternity. Respondents argued that what was most frustrating with listening to local news was that it deliberately left out any news that would potentially portray the government as not performing to the standard expected by citizens. In fact, one had to resort to South African broadcasting services such as SABC and etv to obtain a more nuanced analysis of the Zimbabwean situation and balanced reporting.

> "*There is news you read from certain newspapers but never hear discussions on similar topics on radio stations, it all depends on the affiliation of the reporters. When it comes to issues of governance, you never hear them on Radio Zimbabwe. They hide the truth about what is happening in the country in as much as a father cannot tell his children that next week there will be no food. I suppose this may mean that they are worried, so that way they must hide the truth from us*". Urban male youth, Epworth

Despite government commitment to media reform practitioners report growing securitisation of the media and this undermines press freedom and diversity in reporting

Practitioners in the media sector reported that ongoing efforts to repeal the AIPPA and enact into law the Zimbabwe Freedom on Information Bill as well as the Zimbabwe Media Commission Bill were a step in the right direction. However, there were concerns that specific clauses that media practitioners had proposed were still not incorporated suggesting lack of genuine commitment on the part of the government. The Cyberspace and Cybercrime Bill of 2017 was perceived as undermining the space within which journalists could reasonably conduct their work without fear of persecution. Key informants argued that the Bill was vert repressive and was constraining the mobilisation of citizen for genuine developmental and political dialogue via social media and generally undermining citizens' freedom to access the internet.

Some stories are not reported on because journalists fear police and state security-led intimidation, harassment and arrest. That on its own means not everything can be reported on, and that's how we lose diversity in the media.
Community Leader, Bulawayo

"Some stories are not reported on because journalists fear police and state security-led intimidation and harassment, including arrest". Community leader, Bulawayo

"Local radio selects and segregates information but if you want diverse and unbiased news then you have to search on Studio7. Invitations are never extended to all media houses during certain events and that limits reporting on certain issues. Furthermore, journalists themselves are forced to self-censor because they fear victimisation. We have noticed that it's only media houses operating outside the country that are free to report on anything they wish to report on". Rural male adult, Goromonzi

The media sector is insufficiently diverse content-wise to meet the needs of consumers
Respondents were asked whether their main news sources were providing them with sufficient news to meet their needs. Results show that only when a respondent has multiple sources of information are their news needs met. The exception is with those that exclusively use radios (77.7%) and social media (73.9%[1]) (**See Table B-2**). While peers are a dominant source of news, a greater proportion of those that use this source (53.4%) perceive it as not providing sufficient news for their needs. The greatest satisfaction with sufficiency of news sources is when respondents had access to TV, peers and the radio (85.2%).

Figure 2: Proportion of respondents with news sources sufficient for their needs

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[1] Proportion who view the news source as providing them sufficient news for their needs.
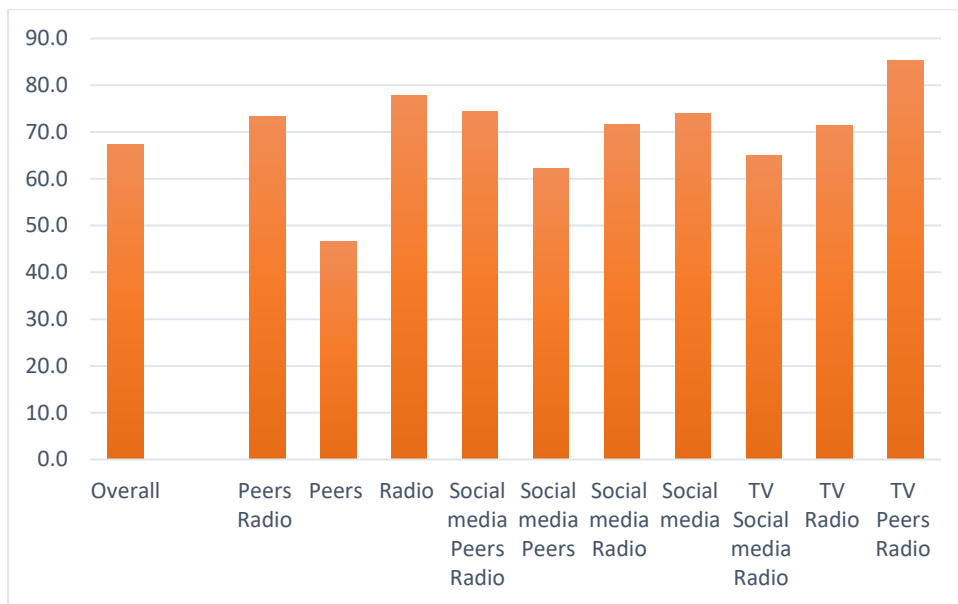
In the qualitative study respondents argued that diversity in news was only possible if a consumer relied on multiple rather than a single media source. Traditional media was providing a partial view and the balance had to be met through emerging and new media, especially social media. A key factor to this was knowledge of where such news and information could be sourced.

> *"We are getting this diversity. One must know where to find information. Most of the stuff we want to know about on current affairs we can get it from social media. Traditional media is starving is of the proper information we want".* **Urban female youth, Gweru.**

Adult women in Epworth, in contrast felt that the news they currently receive was sufficiently diverse. Their argument was that if one was not finding all they needed it was because they were using wrong sources. One could not expect to receive that diversity from state broadcasters alone, as the politics around information was such that reports would be edited to suit special interests. Adult women in Goromonzi defended the diversity within radio as follows:

> *"They try to talk about various issues. On the radio different programmes come with different aims. Some programme come to educate you, like the establishment of herbal gardens and what the herbs can be used for. The news hour informs you about any new developments that will be happening in the country. They really try, it's just that the news may not satisfy everyone because what one might view as important may not be important to the next person".* **Rural adult women, Goromonzi.**

The effectiveness of the media is a function of its capacity to respond to the news and information needs of its consumers.

Respondents raised concern on the depth of coverage of issues by the media and further suggested that the media at times failed to address issues from the perspective of the consumer. Reporting on sports on Radio Zimbabwe, appears to turn a blind eye on basketball, tennis and indoor games. Other preferred media such as Studio 7 were also struggling to provide coverage on sports. Urban adult males in Gweru felt that diversity of news was being hampered by lack of enough journalists and equipment. Consequently, the limited time available to overstretched journalists drives narrow geographical coverage by the media as well as the shallowness in some of the reports. Male adults in Chimanimani reported that in the aftermath of the Cyclone Idai disaster, reporting did cover relevant aspects such as the extent of damage and the nature of needs for the survivors. In a significant number of cases respondents felt that what was being reported was not accurate as it contradicted their lived experiences of the disaster. Such inaccuracies, they argued, emanated from not taking enough time to solicit diverse views and capture perspectives from multiple locations and individuals. In a way,

therefore, the argument was that lack of diversity in the production of news had potential of generating news that would lack the full contextual analysis.

This would feed into the narrative of fake news or sponsored lying. Rural youth in Tsholotsho, and Mutoko felt that the media was not delivering enough coverage for youths. Content and reporting were perceived as being targeted at the adult consumer. Such was perceived as limiting youth access to news and information and youth civic engagement. In Bulawayo and Lupane, both youths and adults concurred that news in Zimbabwe also had a strong focus on Harare at the expense of other geographic locations.

Individual consumers' motivation to access preferred media, including through external sources, reduces their demand for the national broadcaster to deliver news that meets their need

In contrast to their female counterparts, male respondents in Goromonzi argued that the national broadcaster was not sharing enough news and it was not fair to expect consumers to meet gaps in news through other options such as SABC when they were paying license fees to ZBC.

Respondents argued that part of the challenge with ensuring good quality and responsive media in Zimbabwe was that local consumers did not have enough capacity to complain and demand a balanced and responsive media. Rather, Zimbabweans were often too keen to shift and consume external media rather than challenge local institutions to produce better.
In rural locations where access to the radio is limited due to lack of reception respondents reported that they had resorted to playing recorded music rather than listening to current affairs. One respondent in Lupane said the following about media diversity:

> *"Yes, sometimes it's like that and we will be expectant of it. We hear part of the news but we cannot follow up the news. We are downhill and therefore we don't get so much news. We now buy memory cards and use our radios for music since it now appears that it doesn't matter if we know or don't know. But as an older person I would love to hear news often".* Rural adult male, Lupane.

Media Diversity

"Where should we get the information and news we want if the national broadcast isn't sharing with us?" **Rural adult men, Goromonzi**.

"The Minister introduced one hundred percent local content and what happened is that the subscriptions for DSTV and Wizztech immediately shot up! People did not challenge the policy decision but sought for alternatives. Our media cannot grow like that, we need strong grassroots institutions to build a responsive media". **Media practitioner,**

Lack of diversity in the media is a result of multiple factors and drivers

Respondents were asked what they thought were the factors that were contributing to or reinforcing lack of diversity in the media. The following were raised in focus groups:

1. Media houses have loyalty to their funders rather than the public. Their primary focus is on meeting the needs of their funders, consumer needs are therefore, secondary.
2. There is an assumption made on what consumers want to know. Respondents reported that they had never heard of media surveys in the past and felt that their views on what should be disseminated through the media had never been sought before. As a result, the media was not effectively reaching its audience due to mismatched demand and supply.
3. Inclusivity does not appear to be a core value in media dissemination. There are improvements in sign language reporting on the television, but efforts towards ensuring that consumers with disabilities can access news have not been inadequate. An inclusive media should also take into accounts the news and information needs of younger and older consumers, as well as cater for different socioeconomic classes and languages.
4. There is lack of capacity to reach diverse locations leading to focus being on Harare and a few other cities, unless something of national significance happens in another city outside the capital. Journalists are few and equipment is often lacking or outdated.

5. The repressive legal and policy framework limits the space available for developing and sharing media content. Journalists cannot fully exercise their right to freedom of expression with respect to producing news and disseminating it.
6. Capacity is insufficient with respect to reporting on some technical areas such as environmental issues (e.g. climate change or pollution). These subjects are either poorly written about or not reported on at all.

News or information currently covered in the media does not meet the expectations of consumers
Respondents to the survey across age, gender and socioeconomic class concurred that the media was not meeting their expectations with respect to news and information. Participants in focus groups were asked to name the issues they were expecting would be covered through news and or information to the public. Some of the responses to the question on whether respondents felt that the media was meeting their news and information needs included the following:

"Not at all. The current news lacks real issues of bread and butter. Showing us where the President has gone to does not help us in any way. In fact, the country can actually save a lot of money on those travels and direct the finances to hospitals instead". **Male youth, Mutoko**

"Right now, we just listen to the news because there is nothing else to listen to. If it was in the old days when we could afford to subscribe (to other service providers) we would watch anything else other than ZBC for news Havataure chokwadi hameno kuti vanoda kuti tichiwanepi chokwadi chacho [they don't speak the truth, I don't know where they want us to get the truth]". **Adult male, Mutoko**

"Some of the issues are talked about whilst other issues that we expect to hear in the news do not come out at all. For example, we would want to hear the USD trading rate for the day so that people in all corners of Zimbabwe can have a clear picture of value of USD". **Young men Goromonzi**.

"We want to know when the load shedding, water crises and fuel shortages will end or what plans are in place. They will never report on that, instead they will tell you of a car accident in some little-known country in eastern Europe, when we have even more accidents here. Sometimes I fail to understand their logic". **Adult female, Bulawayo.**

"People's tastes and preferences will mirror the content they are receiving". **Male respondent, Gweru.**

"No, broad casters should take time to go to the people and find out the news or information that people would want to hear so that people's voices are incorporated and media houses speak for the voiceless than just to air want they think is important to people without consulting them". **Urban youth, Epworth**

Respondents were asked what they were expecting the media would be reporting in the news. Their views are organised as tabulated below, which has been designed to show the nature of demand for different demographic groups by location, age and gender.

Table 3: What news or information that you need is currently not covered by the media?

Men	Women
Rural adults	
1. What is the government doing to mitigate drought?	
2. Development within the community and nationally	

3. Announcement of death notice	

Rural men	Rural women
1. Social news 2. Current political affairs 3. Politics 4. Jobs and employment creation 5. Sport 6. Support for livestock sector	1. Government plans for education 2. Food prices 3. Are there any self-help projects to support women farmers? 4. Why is government not ensuring that Command inputs are issued to all and not along party lines
Rural male youth	**Rural female youth**
1. Prices and price adjustments 2. Farming news, input assistance programmes 3. Presidential engagements 4. Food distribution 5. Local issues but not covered in any media	1. Economic performance 2. Currency 3. Government's plan to control prices 4. Inappropriate cultural practices that disadvantage girls
Urban adults	
1. Service delivery -water, sewage 2. Employment and money issues 3. What is the fuel situation and what is the government's plan to resolve this problem? 4. What will happen to the mausoleum constructed in Harare? 5. Is the government aware that we are suffering like this? 6. Why is nothing being done to deal with corrupt officials? 7. How will the government support its citizens from xenophobic attacks?	
Urban men	**Urban women**
1. Corruption cases and government response 2. Economy and plans to resuscitate it 3. Employment creation strategies by government 4. Sports news- supporting betting habits, only true news 5. Fuel situation	1. Resolving the electricity situation given direct role in cooking 2. Situation with prices- will these be coming down? 3. Is the president back and is he intending to reduce prices of goods, will he bring back with him some oil? 4. When will the government resolve water issues in urban areas? 5. Plans to deal with growing drug abuse problem
Urban male youth	**Urban female youth**
1. Politics and political awareness 2. Foreign exchange rates 3. What is the government doing to assist those affected by drought? 4. Why is government failing to provide reliable weather forecast? 5. Food prices 6.	1. Foreign exchange rates 2. When are we going to have reliable electricity? 3. Local sports coverage especially local leagues 4. Employment opportunities

What makes news newsworthy?

Respondents identified the following factors as crucial aspects for making information newsworthy:

1. **Should add value**: Information provided should be capable of adding value to the life of the consumer.

> *"When we are waiting impatiently to hear whether Eskom will now be extending electricity supply to Zimbabwe, the broadcaster will surprise you and cover a report*

about a family of three killed in you get a new report that a family of three was killed in a fire accident in Lesotho".

2. **Timeliness**: Information is only newsworthy when shared at the right time when people expect to hear it. Some respondents lamented that their location was poorly served by media and most of the news they were receiving was often stale, but news, nonetheless.

3. **Balanced analysis**: If the news article discusses an individual or organisation, then that party should be afforded an opportunity to provide comments or share their perspective on the issue.

4. **Free of grammatical errors:** Respondents pointed that they are often frustrated when they read articles with poor sentence construction, grammatical errors and poor writing style. The consumer is diverted from the news and focuses their attention on addressing the errors in the document. This observation was mostly true for online publications.

5. **Well-evidenced:** It was noted in focus groups that some journalists were making sensational claims and accusations and yet reading through the article provided one would struggle to find the relevant evidence to support such claims.
   > *"Sometimes we come across articles that are mere accusations and without supporting evidence. We don't stop reading even though the article may not be newsworthy but should know that they are only reading for entertainment purposes".* **Male respondent, Gweru urban**.

6. **Addresses relevant local issues**: There appears to be a strong perception among respondents, especially in Bulawayo and Matabeleland provinces that media focus is on Harare. Respondents argued that the focus on Harare and other cities was at the expense of rural locations.

"At the moment there is no one reporting on the drug abuse problem in our community. We have a lot of children that have dropped out of school and others that are jobless even after completing degrees. Some of the kids, especially the ones with parents in the diaspora, are now drug addicts. You hardly see in-depth coverage of such stories like they do on SABC or etv (panorama). Here they take a story and make it about Harare. That doesn't help us much. An article is only newsworthy if it refers to our suburb or other similar ones like Njube or Nkulumane and can helps us deal with our issues".
Young female respondent, Entumbane, Bulawayo.

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7. **Truthful**. The news report should be based on facts rather than hearsay from confidential unanimous sources.
   > *"We think we have been lied to too many times. ZBC has been telling us lies for a while now so we have resorted to concluding that the truth is the opposite of whatever they will be saying".*

8. **Informs public on things that affect them:** information is newsworthy if it provides guidance to the public on issues that they need to be aware of. Respondents cited examples such as load shedding and water cut schedules in major towns and cities as newsworthy, although ironically, such news was shared mostly on the grapevine. If local news existed, then locals would value news on local crimes and development efforts.

4.2 News Media Habits of Zimbabweans

4.2.1 Sources of news for various demographic groups

Asked on the types and number of sources they use for news, majority of respondents (65%) highlighted that they used more than one source largely influenced by the level of education, wealth quintile and their residence status (rural or urban) (**See Table B-1**). Survey results show that respondents with no education reported to use only one source of news whereas those with increasing levels of education opted to use multiple sources (**See Table B-1.2**). Similarly, more respondents from urban areas reported to use multiple sources of news compared to their rural counterparts where the majority only use one source of news. Respondents in the highest wealth quintile used three or more sources when compared to those in the lowest quintile who had one or two sources. The sources of news, in order of most mentioned were radio (58%), social media (38.4%), TV (21.5%), peers (6.8%), internet based stations (6.8%) and newspapers (6%). This trend is disrupted when the main source of news is considered, **see Table B-6**. Radio (45.2%), Peers (24.7%) are the dominant main sources of news for a majority of categories of respondents with the exception of those with more than secondary education. For this group only 17.8% use Radio as their main source of news. Social media (33.7%) and TV (25.2%) are the main sources for this group followed by internet based news stations (15.3%).

Table B-3-4, provides data on frequency of use and accessibility of main news sources for respondent. 70% of those that use radio as their main source use it at least 5 minutes every day (see Figure 3). This level of use is followed by those use social media (67.6%), internet based news stations (65.2%), peers (61.3%), and TV (41.2%). Newspapers are least frequently used. There is a correlation between frequency of use of the main source and its accessibility (**Table B-3-4**).

Figure 3: Frequency of use of main news sources
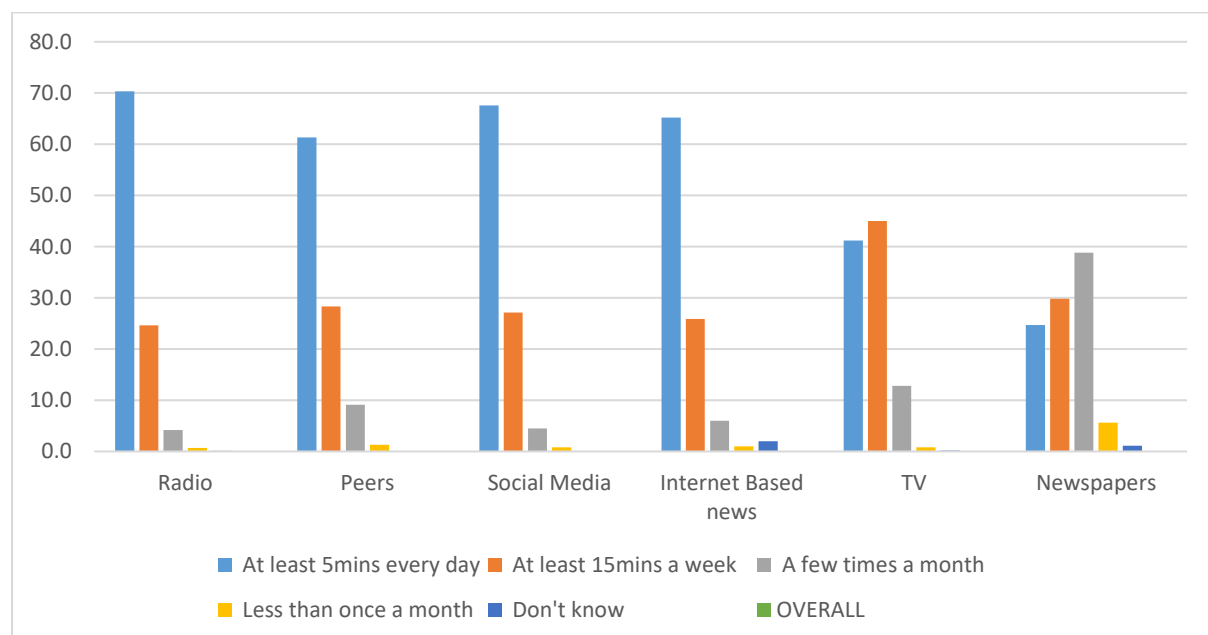

Radio

Radio stations mentioned by respondents were Radio Zimbabwe, Studio 7 and National Fm with Radio Zimbabwe being the most mentioned station (**See Table B-1**). Results show that adult males listen to the radio more than their female counterparts and the youths. Use of the radio as a source of news was recorded and observed to be predominant in the groups of people who have Secondary level of education and less i.e. Primary education and no education and highest among respondents in the rural areas. Given that respondents who listen to the radio do so on a daily basis, and weekly (Figure 3) and find it "easy" and "very easy" to access (58.8%) and that a majority of these are those with low literacy may point to the fact of its non-requirement for reading literacy other capacity to access the news may be the main attracting factor for a majority of respondents. Only 15% of respondents mentioned that they face difficulties with using the radio as a source of news which may be related to poor transmission and frequencies.

Social media

About 15.3% of respondents in the survey mentioned that social media is their main source of news. The types of social media highlighted by the study included WhatsApp (94.8%), Twitter (19.35%) and Face book (8.8%). Youths recorded a notably higher proportion of social media use as a source of news compared to the adults. Among the youths the study also showed that more female youth used social media more than their male counterparts. Use of social media was noted to increase with an increase in level of education and wealth quintile as well. Such correlation could be associated with ability to access or purchase a smart phone, infrastructure (mobile networks and WIFI) and social media and ability to purchase mobile data. A larger proportion of respondents in the urban areas (over 52.6%) than in rural areas (below 26.5%) use social media. Most respondents said they use social media daily i.e. every 5 minutes and with the rest using it at least for 15 minutes weekly. Only 26% of social media users reported to have difficulties with getting information from it. Figure 4 shows use of social media as a source of news in the ten districts surveyed. Bulawayo, Chisipite and Gweru urban had over 50% of respondents using social media.

Figure 4: Social Media as a source of news
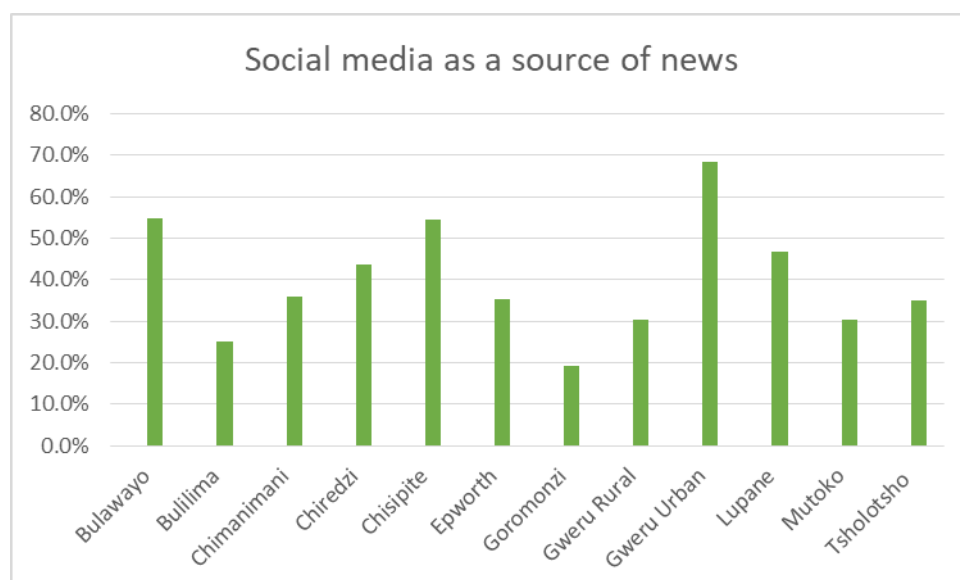
Television

The three television (TV) stations mentioned by respondents were ZBC (85.1%), SABC (29.1%) and BBC (19.1%). More adult males use the TV as a source of news more than their female counterparts, and there are more adults (8.6%) using the TV compared to youths (2.9%). Results of the study also show

that only 10% of respondents use as their main source of news. As the level of education and wealth quintile increases the use of TV as a source of news also increases. There are more TV users in urban areas than there are among rural residents as shown in the Figure 5. There are districts in the sample that have very low TV usage as a source of news such as Bulilima and Gweru rural with less than 1% of the respondents using televisions.

Figure 5: Use of Television as a source of news
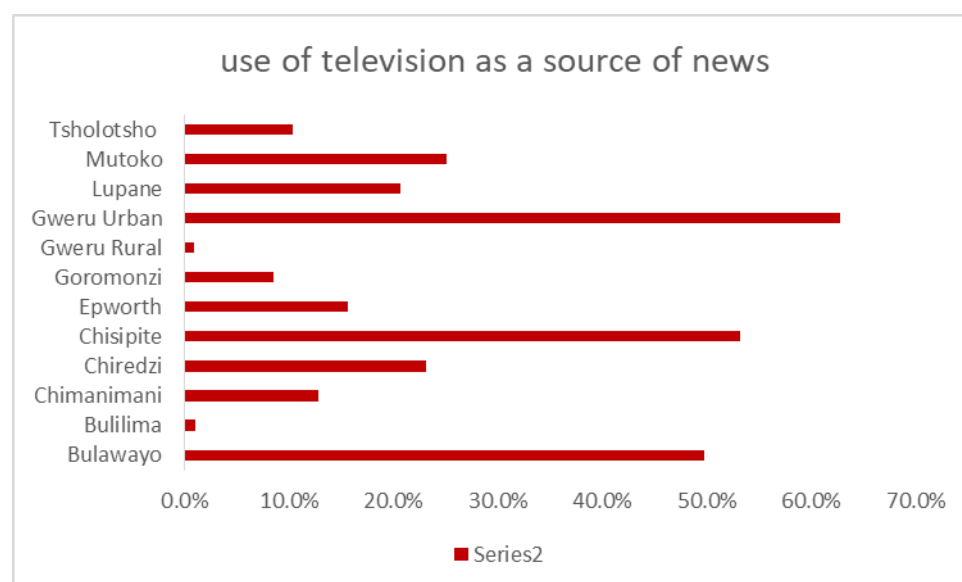
TV users reported that they used the TV on a daily basis or for at least 15 minutes weekly and majority of these do not face difficulties with getting news from the television (**See Table B-3-4**).

Internet based stations
A low proportion (6%) of the survey respondents use internet based stations as a source of news with the majority being urban residents than rural. Only 3.1% rely on internet based stations as their main source of news. Use of internet based stations increases with corresponding increase in the level of education and wealth quintile which can be attributed to the capacity of these individuals to access the internet (**See Table B-6**). More young people than adults use the internet. However, more males (both adult and youth) use the internet more than their female counterparts with adult females having the lower indication of usage.

Peers
Peers are a major source of news for all age groups in both rural and urban areas. Adult males show a slightly lower proportion of reliance on peers for news compared to their female counterparts and youths (**See Table B-1**). However, reliance on peers decreases with increase in level of education and wealth quintile. Results from areas such as Chisipite, Bulawayo and Gweru Urban shows significantly lower proportion of respondents relying on peers for news compared to the rural areas such as Lupane (94.4%) and Tsholotsho (85%). The figure below illustrates the differences in the use of peers as a source of news in the survey delimitation.

Figure 6: Proportion of respondents using peers as a main source
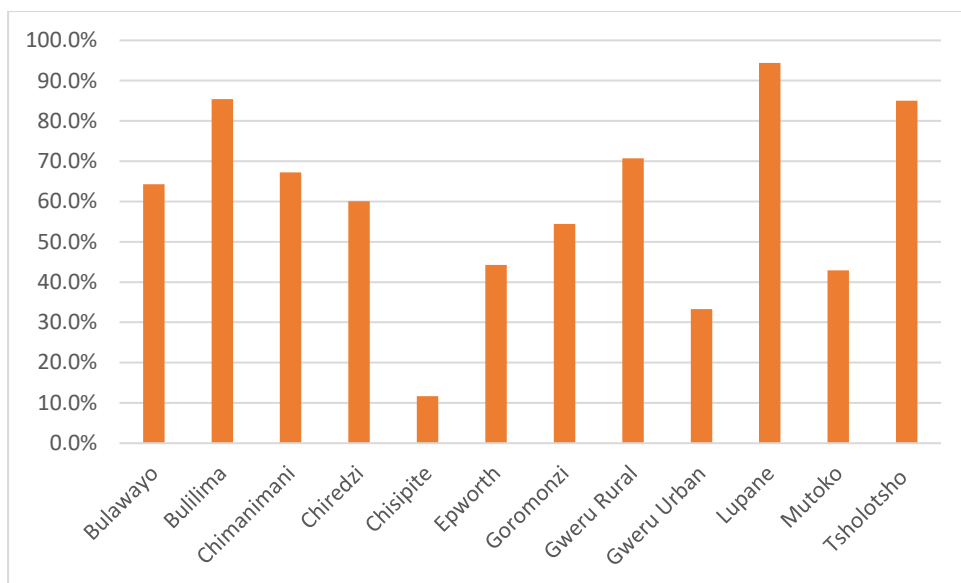
Newspapers

Newspapers have the lowest proportion of respondents using it as a source of news in all the districts. There are more adults (8.6%) using newspapers as a source of news compared to youths (2.9%). Among adults, there are more male adults reading newspapers to obtain news compared to their female counterparts. Results indicate that there is higher use of newspapers in urban (10.2%) than in rural (2.5%) areas where issues of access and affordability possibly come into the play. As reading newspapers requires a level of literacy and financial resources to purchase them, the proportion of respondents using newspapers increased with the level of education and wealth quintile respectively (**See Table B-1**).

Figure 7: Use of newspapers as a source of news
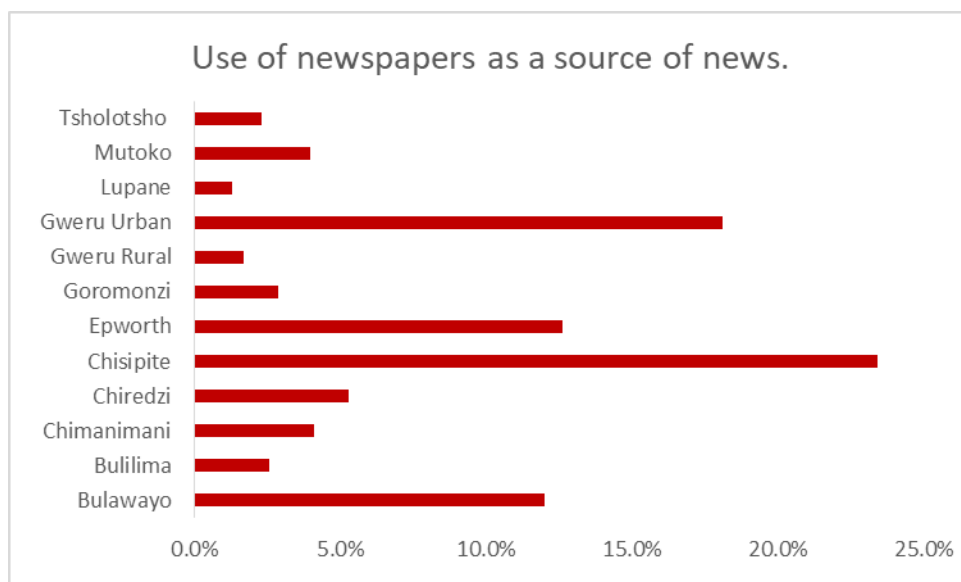
4.2.2 Factors and barriers to accessing news

There are significant differences in media consumption by men, women and youth in urban and rural settings

Focus groups were asked to identify and collectively rank the different media they were using for news and information. Analysis of data collected from these focus groups reveal the following key findings on media habits:

1. The order of preference and use of different media is determined by accessibility of that media, especially with respect to network coverage, costs, requirement for electricity, etc;
2. Adult males have the widest diversity of news and information than any other demographic category;
3. Studio 7 is used by respondents in both urban and rural areas, although more common in the latter. Studio 7 is also more trusted and preferred by respondents as compared to local radio stations (national radio);
4. Newspapers are the least preferred and least used form of media for news. Rural respondents to this baseline were drawn from locations with limited access to newspapers and urbanites prefer other forms of media;
5. Women are more likely to rely on peers from within their community for news compared to men. In fact, peers were hardly ranked as an important source of media for male respondents;

The motivation and willingness to pay for accessing different media is directly related to perceived benefit at individual level
1. Purchasing more than one newspaper in order to boost understanding of issues from holistic perspective
2. Balance information needs which is not possible from one source. May have to buy newspaper for employment opportunities and death notices
3. Jobseekers found purchasing the Sunday Mail and Mail & Guardian helpful for finding opportunities, in addition to consuming news and information including from other sources too.
4. Lack of funds to buy smartphones was the main hindrance faced by youths in accessing news and information electronically

Respondents faced multiple challenges in accessing different media
The baseline collated the different issues faced by respondents in using different media to access news and information. These have been organised around the type of media used.

Table 4: Challenges faced in using different media in rural and urban locations

	Rural	Urban
Newspapers	1. Distances to purchase point too far 2. Newspapers received too late 3. Publications in local languages are only weekly 4. Multiple use of newspapers may restrict sharing with neighbours	1. Cannot afford to purchase due to state of economy 2. May need more than one newspaper to get a balanced view, costs more 3. Trend towards bite-size and news on the go 4. Headline stories pre-empted on radio news so not much point in buying
Radio	1. No network coverage in rural locations	1. Power outages limit listening time especially during daytime
Television	1. No network coverage in rural locations 2. No receivers (TVs) in areas with some reception	1. Power outages limit listening time especially during daytime 2. Poor quality programming

Regional or international TV	1. Set up costs are unaffordable 2. Poor reception 3. Requires access to electricity	1. High and rising costs for subscriptions 2. Local power outages may coincide with prime times for news updates 3. Competing interests between current affairs and entertainment (e.g. cartoons for children, telenovas and sport). 4. News may be too depressing
Social Media	1. Very few people can afford to buy smartphones 2. Poor network connectivity 3. No reliable sources for recharging phones 4. Lack of awareness on social media leading to suspicions and fears about 'being found out'.	1. High cost of mobile data 2. Concern around addiction to social media 3. Too much unverified news and high risk of reading fake news

Alternative media exists and serve an important function. However, there is scope for strengthening these platforms to support access to information and news

Respondents named a range of locally relevant channels to disseminating news and information. These ranged from discussions in public transport and churches in urban areas to community meetings, borehole and dip tank interactions. In Tsholotsho the study team encountered a community publication known as 'Dlulisa' meaning pass on- and once one has read, they are obliged to share with their neighbours. Word of mouth plays a significant role in news sharing. Also, respondents also reporting using one media to validate news. For example, an SMS may be sent to enquire from a trusted person whether the information reported in the news or on social media is true or not.

The Zimbabwean news media are generally considered to be doing an average to below average job

Most respondents were sceptical about the role of news media in keeping he country up to date and help them understand the news. The major criticism of the news media included the following:

1. Too much focus on Harare at the expense of the whole country. This is worsened by the limited number of community radio and television stations.
2. Partisan bias especially by state media and unfair criticism by the independent media undermine the quality of reporting and leave consumers unsure of the facts.
3. Poor quality journalism with limited research, insufficient fact checking and no retractions when errors have been made
4. 'Irrelevant stories' given too much airtime while issues of national interest are undiscussed
5. Poor connectivity especially in rural areas deprive people of access to timely news
6. Too much focus on gossip and rumours than on strong investigative journalism
7. Limited mastery of effectively communicating subjects of technical nature to non-specialist audiences without distorting meaning
8. Journalists are not doing enough to monitor and scrutinise powerful people and businesses. When done, reports do not often show evidence of use of data to demonstrate breach of the law.

4.3 Public Trust Level in Media

Public levels of trust were assessed across the enumeration areas and compared for the various types of media. The results are presented below.

4.3.1 Credibility of sources of news

The general trend in the data shows that a majority of consumers of news view their news sources as not credible (**See Table B-5-1 and Table B-5-2**). Radio is considered the most credible by 46% of those that use the source but a majority, 54%, consider it as not a credible source of news[2]. Peers are considered the least credible source of news by 40.6% of respondents who use this source while credibility of social media is also viewed lowly by 20.2% of those that use this source. Newspapers are also viewed as a less credible source of news (**See Table B-5-2**).

Radio

Data across all age groups shows that the radio is regarded as a credible source of news as indicated by a very small marginal differences amongst them. Credibility scores of the radio were noted higher among adult males compared to their female counterparts and youths. While the uneducated, primary and secondary level educated respondents highly regarded the radio as a credible source (47.3%), respondents with higher than secondary level of education reported lower levels of trust (18.3%) or credibility of the radio as a source of news. Lower levels of trust of the radio in the urban residents were recorded compared to the rural dwellers.

Respondents were asked to provide reasons for their preference for various media. Studio 7 as an example for external radio station was preferred and trusted for always making efforts to get every stakeholder involved in a particular issue or case to give their side of the story, as opposed to the often one sided views common for other publications and media. Also, respondents were impressed by the fact that whenever Studio 7 learnt that it had erred in its delivery of news or analysis, it would apologise and publicly retract the story. Other media were not seemingly bound by such ethics. Respondents were also more confident sharing news and information from Studio 7 "because we know it has gone through a rigorous verification process".

Peers

Results of the survey indicate that females both youth and adults regarded peers as credible in comparison with their male counterparts. Respondents with no level of education identified peers as a credible source whereas credibility of peers decreases with increase in the level of education of respondents and wealth status. Residents in rural areas place a high regard to their social networks, have more platforms for interaction and sharing of information, ideas and news compared to urban dwellers. As such respondents from urban areas do not consider peers to be a credible source compared to their rural counterparts.

Social media

Social media is mostly regarded credible by respondents in urban areas with a larger proportion being those in the fourth and highest wealth quintile. A larger proportion of youths than adults consider social media a credible source of news. Respondents regarding social media as a credible source of news increased with an increase in level of education i.e. from secondary to more than secondary education. This comes with an increased proportion of respondents living in areas where there is availability of infrastructure (mobile network and Wi-Fi), ownership of a smart phone, proficiency in using the application and affordability of data bundles which is more favourable to urban dwellers than rural residents.

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[2] However it is not considered the least credible as only 5.3% of consumers of this source viewed as a the least credible source of news.

Respondents in focus groups were asked to rate, out of a possible score of ten, how much they trusted the various media from which they were obtaining their news and information. The majority of respondents rely on WhatsApp for their news and information, but argue that despite this, they do not trust fully the information and news received via WhatsApp as a media outlet. In most cases, the decision to rate WhatsApp poorly was that they had come across fake news in the past or saw the possibility of anyone creating news or information.

> *"WhatsApp is the most trusted because you get information as raw as it can be, and you can choose on your own what to follow. You even get pictures of dead bodies at an accident scene. I give WhatsApp 8/10",* **Rural mixed youth, Mutoko**

With respect to WhatsApp, respondents value videos as cementing evidence in support of a story. However, there was emerging evidence that videos from different locations and time periods were sometimes shared to drum up emotions in support of a cause. One example was that of a video in which people were seen jumping off some high-rise building. This video was used during the 2019 xenophobic attacks in South Africa as evidence of violence against foreign nationals in that country, when in fact the video had been taken in India. Such videos could have potentially fuelled revenge attacks on South Africans by foreign nationals based on falsehoods. Weak points on WhatsApp as media included the absence of accountability with anyone being able to generate own content and share; no awareness of an office or details where complaints can be lodged; and inaccessibility where access to smartphone and mobile data is curtailed either by costs or government moratorium.

Newspapers
As a source of news, newspapers were reported to have very few users and were considered credible by adults, with more males viewing it as a credible source more than their female counterparts. Just as the trend was with usage, credibility of the newspapers is endorsed by respondents who are: in urban, more educated and in the higher wealth quintile (**See Table B-5-1**). Of the respondents that reported that they use newspapers as a source of news, 1% said it was their main source of news. Majority of this group said they face challenges with getting news from the newspaper as a significant number get news a few times a month with only 24.7% using it daily. Implications of this are that users of this source and those that use it as a primary source only get news late and cannot rely on it for decision making.

Television
Of the 21.5% that said they use the TV as a source of news, 12.9% consider it as a credible source. Adults in the study both males and females said they viewed TV as a credible source more than youths. Respondents with lower levels of education i.e. no education and primary level have a lower proportion of respondents that regard TV as a credible source of information. This may stem from their low literacy levels and its relevance as a medium of news transmission they can relate with. On the other hand respondents in urban areas such as Bulawayo (30.3%), Chisipite (28.6%) Gweru urban (33.3%) have a higher proportion regarding it credible.

Internet based news station
With comparatively low levels of usage (6.8%) only 3.4% consider Internet based news stations as the most credible source of news. Male youths have the highest number of respondents that consider it the most credible more than their female counterparts, while adults remain with a significantly lower number that endorse the internet based stations as credible sources of news. Usage and credibility of the internet comes together with access and connectivity which is not the case in the rural target population.

The qualitative study summarised the levels of trust, reasons behind such trust level challenges faced with each type of media were discussed and are summarised in Table 5.

The levels of trust and reasons for such, as well as the.

Table 5: Level of trust for current affairs

Media	Average rating	Strengths	Challenges
Studio 7	9/10	• High level of accuracy, news can be verified • Retract stories if there find further information • Live interviews give confidence that information or news are not being created	• Strong bias towards political news • Biased against the official government position
Regional/ international TV	8/10	• Good coverage of local content, have no reason for political bias • Wider engagement of political players as compared to local TV • Good quality reception through DSTV or other satellites • Current affairs available via other platforms such as YouTube	• Subscriptions for local consumers may be expensive in the long term • Influence of external media on norms and values
WhatsApp	7/10	• Circulates fast • Provides picture and video evidence to support claims • Easy to share	• News and information not always true • No verified source, anyone can generate news • Data costs are exorbitant and seemingly unregulated
Local Radio	5/10	• Number of regional radio stations is growing, and listeners have more choice • Provides wider coverage than television	• Lack of electricity limits accessibility of radio • Trustworthy only for non-political and non-economy information or news.
ZBC TV	5/10	• Frequent repeats allow one to catch up with the news	• Strong political bias often results in falsehoods being reported • Poor quality programming reduces time people spend on this media • Accessibility affected by shortage of electricity • Does not cover the issues of public interest, lies by omission
State-owned newspapers		• Gives official position on current issues, although this	• News often stale

	4/10	may be in contrast with accepted reality	• High cost of accessing newspapers, may have to travel
Independent newspapers	7/10	• Alternative to government papers • Insider insight often used • Well researched	• Influence of owner • Foreign funding may drive external interests
Other social media (YouTube)	Highly variable	• Instant communication • Wider coverage • Ease of access • Interactive through comments	• Depends on unnamed sources • Open to abuse as there is limited oversight • Poor quality journalism as anything can be news

4.3.2 Determinants of public trust in media

The most important factor considered in ascertaining credibility and trust of a source by both adults and youths was ease of access to the source of news. Other common factors mentioned were popularity, reputation and cost associated with accessing the source. Language, reliability and credibility and convenience of access of the sources were also highlighted to be important in considering whether or not a source if credible or not (**See Table C-1**). Trends revealed fewer female adults placing little importance on reputation compared to youths and their male counterparts. Youths on the other hand placed more importance on the cost associated with access which may largely be influenced by levels of income, employment status and dependency. The more educated on the other hand mentioned that they considered the ownership of the source in measuring credibility of a source. Table 6 (below) shows the various sources mentioned during the study and the levels of trust respondents have (Also See **Table C-6**).

Table 6: Public trust in media and information sources

How much you trust this as a source of news and information?	SOURCE "INVISIBLE/INACCESSIBLE" to (Not aware of/ Not knowledgeable about)	TRUST SCORE (1 ="not trusted at all" 10= "fully trusted")	
	%	N	Mean
C6. 1 Newspapers	72.6	807	5.48
C6.2. ZBC	60.9	1152	6.34
C6.2. SABC	85.4	429	7.03
C6.2. BBC	87.9	357	7.61
C6.2. SuperSport	89.5	309	8.23
C6.2. CNN	90.8	271	7.46
C6.2. Enews	91.3	256	7.11
C6.2. Aljezeera	93.1	202	7.46
C6.2. Other TV	99.0	30	6.5
C6.3 Internet based news station	87.0	382	6.65
C6.4 Whatsapp	51.3	1432	5.63
C6.4 Facebook	82.0	529	5.56
C6.4 Twitter	90.7	275	6.52
C6.4 Instagram	92.6	217	5.79
C6.4 Youtube	93.9	180	6.19
C6.4 Linkedin	95.4	136	5.45
C6.4 Sasai	98.4	47	5.04
C6.4 Other	99.3	20	5.3
C6.5 Peers	16.1	2469	5.35

How much you trust this as a source of news and information?	SOURCE "INVISIBLE/INACCESSIBLE" to (Not aware of/ Not knowledgeable about)	TRUST SCORE (1 ="not trusted at all" 10= "fully trusted")	
C6.6 Radio Zimbabwe	44.8	1624	7.32
C6.6 National FM	71.3	845	6.76
C6.6 Studio7	79.2	613	7.23
C6.6 Power FM	81.3	549	6.39
C6.6 Star FM	84.5	456	6.63
C6.6 ZiFM Stereo	91.9	239	6.57
C6.6 Midlands FM	94.5	163	6.44
C6.6 Skyz metro	96.5	103	6.32
C6.6 Central FM	96.6	101	5.85
C6.6 Diamond FM	96.6	101	5.59
C6.6 Classic 263	97.8	64	5.64
C6.6 Capitalk FM	98.2	53	5.98
C6.6 Breeze FM	98.6	42	4.55
C6.6 Khulumani FM	98.7	37	5.65
C6.6 YAFM	98.8	35	5.23
C6.6 Nyaminyami FM	98.9	32	4.5
C6.6 Hevoi FM	99.1	26	4.42
C6.6 Other radio station	98.9	31	5.45

These issues were further interrogated in the qualitative study with the following findings.

The pursuit for breaking news is undermining the quality of reporting with some journalists downplaying fact checking and verification prior to publication

Respondents perceive the media as increasingly being driven by competition to break news. This seems to be influencing a new trend in which fact checking appears to be a secondary concern and fake and inaccurate stories are in circulation. Even when the truth gets known there are no retractions done, and no institution to follow up to ensure responsible reporting and journalism.

"There are too many fake stories doing the rounds. There is a story of a baby that drowned in a well in Entumbane. In the news it was said that the child fell into a well in Richmond. When they don't know the story, they create something to publish their stories. No-one challenges them, there are no retractions even after they get to know the facts". **Local leader, Entumbane, Bulawayo**

"There is too much competition to break news. This is fuelling malpractice among those tasked with delivering news and information to the public". **Local leader, Njube, Bulawayo**

Individual experiences with media are influential in shaping trust level

The baseline found that the ratings on the trust levels for various media was influenced by the respondent's own experiences of the media in addition to the influence of the shared collective perception.

"Case in point is that just a few weeks ago, there was a message that went viral where a residential flat was burning, and people were jumping or being thrown down from the top floor. 'WhatsApp' claimed that this flat was being burnt by xenophobic South Africans. That

was not a fact. I panicked since my children stay in Hillbrow. I give WhatsApp a score of 0/10 on trustworthiness".

Older women prefer radio for news while younger women prefer WhatsApp

The radio is one of the most trusted media despite the significant pro-government current affairs content. Respondents reported that they trusted the radio for everything else but political issues. The basis of trust was that the radio is the official mouthpiece of the government and even if some of the content was falsified and perceived as not being in sync with reality, that content was the basis on which government was planning and executing its mandate and therefore, was the 'official version of the truth'. Many of the older respondents had had a longer-term relationship with the radio and this was also part of what influenced their positive trustworthiness rating for radio. Women in Goromonzi felt that the younger generation was inclined towards "using SD cards and MP3s for entertainment, rather than enjoying the radio". In rural Chimanimani, Chiredzi and Lupane there were reports by some parents that youth were 'monopolising' the radio without accessing airwaves, thereby limiting the adults' access to radio content.

"As long as they are unemployed and spend the whole day loitering around the house, we are likely to get into catfights with them. My son has literally taken over the radio, I have to beg for a chance to listen to my programmes otherwise he plays music the whole day and we miss out on news". **Rural adult female, Chiredzi**

"The most trusted is WhatsApp rated at 8/10 because it gives details as they are without any reservations. The second trusted is the internet rated 6/10. The least trusted is Radio 4/10 because it lives you with a lot of unanswered questions". **Urban female youth, Gweru**

Government is complicit in the construction of a culture of fake news

Respondents argued that the government was fuelling a culture of fake news and mistrust of the media. Three main issues were cited. Firstly, the government's flip-flopping on policies and regulations meant that the public would treat each announcement with suspicion on the grounds that there were chances it would change, and by translation also perceive the media with the same weight of suspicion.

Respondents cited the example of the RBZ ban of cash-in and cash out services on Ecocash on the 3rd of October 2019 and reinstate the same on the same day as testament to policy instability. To show how such Ecocash were no longer going to be available, but this was reversed within a day. Secondly, government was making announcements and backtracking on them and in the process appearing to be ingenuine while painting the messenger (media) as peddling fake news. Observation of the media by the survey team identified a case in which Minister Joram Gumbo was initially reported as having been arrested on corruption charges, and a day later the story changed to 'never arrested'.

"The main problem is that those who should be telling the truth often keep quiet and then others fill that vacuum with fake news. There is so much fake news doing the rounds on almost any issue you can think of". **Urban mixed group, Entumbane, Bulawayo**

"The government makes it difficult for us to trust the media, let alone trust it (government). How can you trust the government when people in the same ministry say different things on the same issue?"

"The news shared was that Ecocash services had been banned, and then the news again said, no, we are back on Ecocash. How can we trust the media when it cannot make up its mind?

"They told us that foreign currency was no longer allowed, people panicked. That was never true, people still use their forex to buy in the shops, and for us, we continue to suffer as we do not have the forex".

Thirdly, government would not comment or provide official statement on issues of the public's interest. This failure to communicate on key issues, for example, with regards to the health status of the Vice President, or the situation on fuel or electricity, was fuelling speculation and the gap between information demand by the public and supply by government was being met by speculation and opinions. Lack of official communication on issues of public concern creates the space for fake news.

Figure 8: Media coverage of alleged arrest of government minister
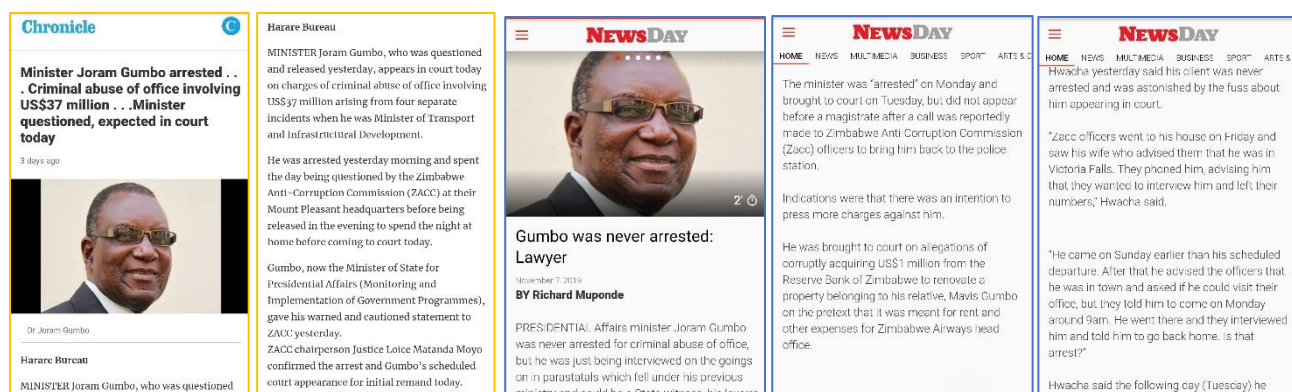
While they may be debateable technicalities in the above reports, for the average consumer these contradictions may speak to the fact that there was never an arrest in the first place, despite the alleged corruption, and that the government can use the media to make people believe that something is being done.

Trust of the media may be undermined by its failure to prevent a humanitarian situation

The Cyclone Idai was widely reported through several media, especially local radio and television. However, while they reported on the impending hazard, they did not proffer any solutions for facilitating evacuation of individuals in these areas that were on the line of destruction. Further, the media should have taken a more active role of holding the Civil Protection Unit to account such that more tangible actions were taken to prevent loss of life and damage to property. Regardless, the media did play a role in exposing the impact of the cyclone, largely through social media platforms (mostly WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter), as well as highlighting the corruption around misappropriation of donations to the survivors of the cyclone. By not filling the vacuum in the case of Cyclone Idai preparedness, the media is seen as having missed an opportunity to build trust and be a key influencer in shaping development processes and outcomes.

"The media failed to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe with cyclone Idai. Media should have helped with the evacuation".
Mixed group, Chimanimani

In addition, the government's process of verification of deaths prior to reporting as opposed to local communities doing the tallies led to a perception that the Government wanted to downplay the impact of the cyclone. Respondents reported that they were counting locally how many people had been lost or unaccounted for and their verified numbers were much higher than what the radios were reporting. This further undermined the level of trust of the local radios.

Furthermore, early warning information system such as those employed by the Civil Protection UNIT (CPU) were misleading and misdirected. The Government through the Civil Protection Unit shared advice on how people cold protect themselves from likely harm due to the cyclone. Respondents argued that if government had the capacity to communicate via bulk message why was this media not utilised to provide clear guidance with respect to evacuation especially for those locations that were

going to, and suffered the most from, the effects of the cyclone. In addition, messages sent gave guidance that showed lack of appreciation of the nature of the challenge as it was unfolding.
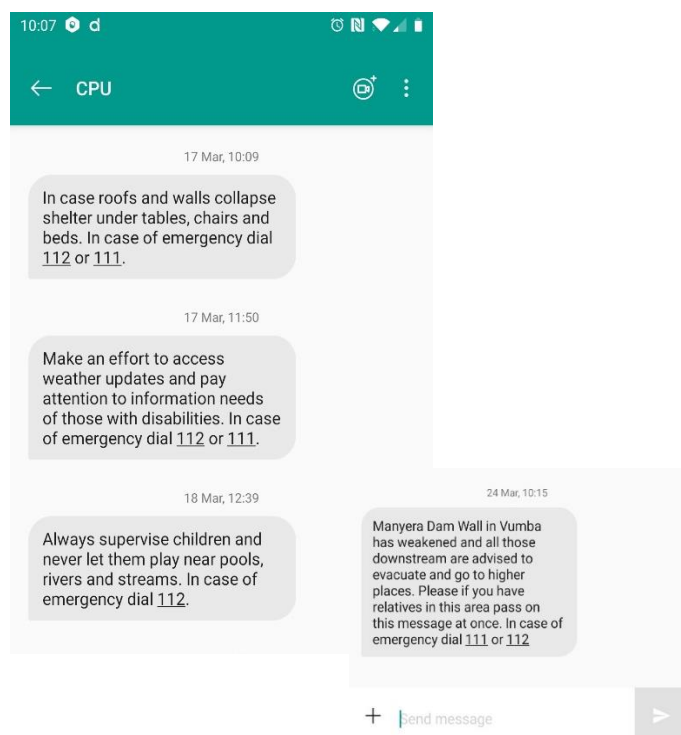
Some respondents said that it was difficult to trust the CPU for two main reasons: they kept quiet until the cyclone had already arrived, and secondly, their advice was impractical. For example, respondents questioned how they were expected to fit under beds and chairs, and how that would protect them when the walls of houses had collapsed. Further, advice to vacate was coming during the Cyclone rather than in advance when lives and livelihood assets could have been saved. For a significant proportion of communities, cell phones were lasting up to three days and thereafter they would not have any means of accessing such information. In fact, poorer families, which were also more likely to have members living with disability, were also the least likely to own a cell phone.

4.3.3   Sources of news during crises and national events

The sources of news during a crisis are narrow. Over 50% of respondents have access to only one source, less than 35% use two sources while less than 12% use a combination of three or more sources. (**See Table C-5-1a, Table C-5-2a, and Table C-5-3a**). Across all combined sources, Social media has a dominant presence. In order of most relied own source, Peers, Radio and Social Media are the most used (**See Table C-5-1**). The trend is the same for all crises and categories. While this is the case, larger proportion of youths, urban residents and the wealthiest rely on social media than adults, rural residents and the poorest (**See Table C-5-1**). For the wealthiest and urban residents over 20% use TV as an information and news source during crises compared to less than 2% for rural residents and the poorest. The proportion of respondents that rely on peers for news and information during a crisis is significantly higher for rural residents and those in the lowest wealth quintile (**Table C-5-1**).

Despite peers being the main source of information they did not provide sufficient information during crises. Respondents with access to two or more sources were more likely to be more satisfied with the sufficiency of information they received during crises (See **Table C-5-1b, Table C-5-2b, and Table C-5-3b)**.

During a humanitarian catastrophe Peers (22%) and Radio (17.7%) are the main sources used. About 13.9% of respondents use a combination of Peers and Radio, 6.4% social media and peers, and 4.6% Social Media and Radio. Of those that use three sources, 4.1% use a combination of Social media, Peers and Radio. The rest of the combinations are used by less than 2% (**See Table C-5-1a**). Peers do not provide sufficient information for 41% of those that use this source compared to 89.7% who got sufficient information from the Radio, 89.8% who got sufficient information from the TV and 80.4% from Social Media. For those that used more than one source, the most satisfied with sufficiency of

information were respondents had access to TV and Social Media (87%), Social Media and Radio (85.9%) and Social Media, Peers and Radio (85%).

Peers were a dominant source of information and news during violent protests (**See Table C-5-2a**). Unlike sources for humanitarian catastrophe, sufficiency of information available to respondents during violent protests increased with access to more sources. For example, 94% of those with access to a combination of Social Media and TV found the combined sources to provide sufficient information when compared to Peers alone (57.2%), Radio alone (84.6%), and Social Media alone (76.1%) (See **Table C-5-2b)**.

During election periods 26.4%, 51.1%, 47.9% of respondents used Social media, Peers and Radio as sources of information (**See Table C-5-1**). About 10% used other sources that included the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), Political parties and Village leaders. However, 56.5% of these respondents relied on only one source with Peers (22%) and Radio (20%) being the main sources. The 33.1% that relied on two sources, relied on a combination of Peers and Radio (12.6%) with the rest of the combinations less than 5% (**See Table C-5-3a**). More urban residents tend to rely on the radio and TV with Radio Zimbabwe and ZBC TV being the dominant stations respectively. Whatsapp® (97.7%) is the dominant social media platform used during election periods. In terms of sufficiency of information more people who use TV (90.8%), Social Media, Peers, Radio (90.8%), Social Media (89.9%), Radio (89%) with satisfied with the sufficiency of information they received (**See Table C-5-3b**).

4.3.4 Determinants of information sources during crises

WhatsApp is the most preferred form of media during an environmental or climatic crisis such as cyclone

Most focus groups conducted in Chimanimani and Chiredzi concurred that WhatsApp was the most trusted media during the Cyclone Idai crisis that affected most of Manicaland in May of 2019. The main features underpinning this preference include the higher reach of news and information via WhatsApp including with video and pictorial evidence of the extent of the impact, expected trends and external support for victims of the weather hazard. Respondents reported that some news clips from various international and regional news briefings, such as from Press TV and SABC, were shared via WhatsApp thus providing communities with insight from various other forms of media which they could not access given after loss of power, damage to radios and television sets, poor roads and inaccessibility of print media, among other local changes.

In political crisis there is a stronger preference for WhatsApp although that comes with high levels of political risks and likelihood of falsehoods being shared

While urbanites and those in the peri-urban locations sampled identified WhatsApp as their main source of news and information during a political crisis, in rural areas such as Mutoko and Lupane respondents cited the radio as being more accessible and reliable. In the case of the January 2019 public protests, respondents cited the government's blockage of the internet as having deterred their access to information and news, although innovative options such as Telegram and VPN later bypassed

"The challenge is that quite often when we are in a crisis the government blocks communication channels, like what they did with the January protests. But people still found a way via another app, but access to news was poor".
Young woman, Entumbane, Bulawayo

"As for ZBC we give it minus ten (-10). The radio and TV mostly churn propaganda. We gave it a 3 because there is sports news which is usually correct. Weather news is almost always wrong".
Adult male, Entumbane, Bulawayo

the blockade and those with access were sharing news via ordinary text messages or word of mouth. There were also threats that those caught with messages of political nature in random searches by state security agents risked detention by police while those found to be sharing news of political nature were liable to arrests. These risks meant that a significant among of sharing had to be done face to face through interpersonal interactions. In both Lupane and Tsholotsho, however, respondents reported that external radios such as Studio 7 offered more reliable news during periods of political crisis, and especially because these stations had live interviews and also because local reception was better with short wave radio (Studio7) and less accommodative of the local radio stations mostly on FM radio. In Mutoko respondents were accessing local Zimbabwean radio stations and reported that while some news regarding political situations were sometimes reported, the information was predominantly very limited, politically biased and often downplaying the extent of the political situation. Phrases such as "irrelevant" were used to describe the role of local radio in a political crisis.

4.4   Perceptions and Understanding of Key Development Issues

This section of the study sought to describe the baseline scenario with respect to how respondents perceived and understood key development issues and the role of the media. The focus questions guiding field data collection and analysis include the following:

1.   What issues are of priority to be covered in the media?
2.   How do Zimbabweans view media coverage of key developmental issues i.e. climate change, environment, health, gender, human rights, corruption and accountability?
3.   How do the audience value how the different media cover all the topics?
4.   What is the capacity of journalist to report on priority development issues?

The baseline made the following findings with respect to the focus questions:

4.4.1   News topics of interest

A majority of respondents (75.3%) have no specific news of interest to them and consume what is supplied by the various media sources they have access to. The highest numbers of people with no specific topic were in Matabeleland districts, Tsholotsho (97.3%), Bulilima (89.4%), Lupane (98.7%), and Bulawayo (98%) (**See Table D-1**). These low figures maybe a result of limited interest in local news by residents in these areas. For the 24.3% that have specific topics of interests, 56.5% were interested most in news about the economy, followed by weather and climate change (37.9%), Politics (37.4%) and Government Performance (23%). A significant proportion (18.8%) were interested most in other topics which include sports, education, music and agriculture. For youths, the economy (53.3%), politics (36.1%), and weather and climate change (31.5%) are the most interesting to them. When wealth is considered, those in the highest wealth quintile are interested most in news about the economy (62.8%), politics (41.5%), and government performance (30.1%). A lower proportion in the wealthiest quintile are most interested in news about the weather and climate change. Those in the lowest wealth quintile are most interested in news about the economy (64%), and weather and climate change (49.8%) and less about government performance (21.3%) and politics (25.8%) (**See Table D-1**).

Figure 9: Topics most interesting to respondents
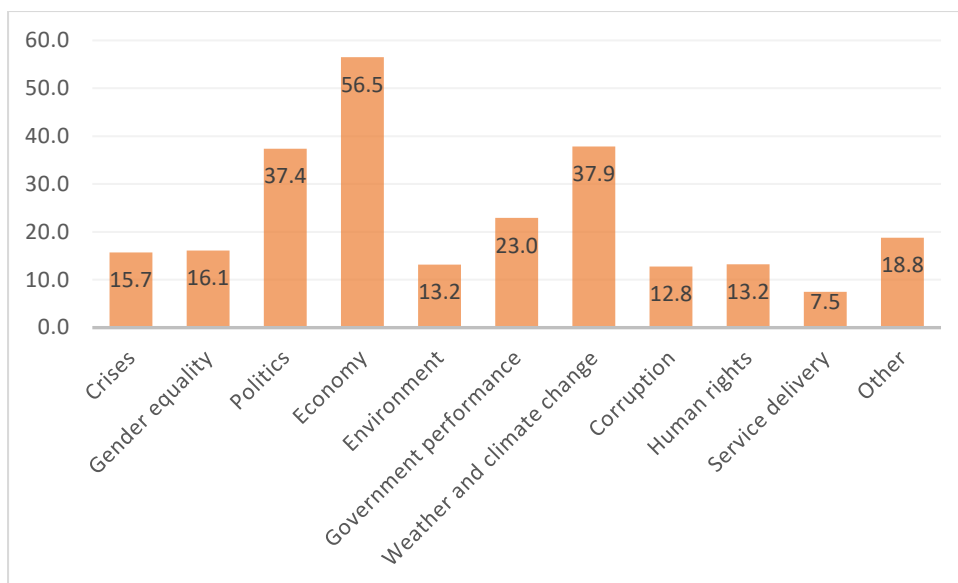
The top five news sources for these topics across all categories in order of most used are: Radio, Social Media, Peers, TV and Internet based stations (**See Table D-3**). Those that use Radios, Social Media, TV and internet based stations are more likely satisfied or very satisfied with the coverage issues of their interest in these sources. Internet based news station users on the other hand registered the highest levels of satisfaction of coverage of all the topics they accessed. This could be explained by the fact that internet news based stations have a wider range of sites and sources within themselves from which users obtain their news and information. Those that use peers are more likely to not be satisfied with coverage of issues they are most interested in (**See Table D-4-5-1**). Low levels of satisfaction may be linked to the low education levels of survey participants to be knowledgeable enough to provide adequate information to suit the news and information needs of their counterparts.

Unlike other issues discussed earlier, having multiple sources of information does not seem to increase satisfaction with coverage with the exception of when Peers are combined with other sources (**See Table D-4-5-1**). Majority of respondents discuss the issues they read or hear with their friends across all sources. Collective action, though low (less than 2% organise with others to address the problem they hear about) it increases between two to five teams when the topics are covered through social media alone or a combination of social media and another source (**Table D-4-5-1**). Thus coverage through social media can invoke collective action.

Respondents were asked about the three most important information to them and they would want to have a regular update on. Results are presented in **Table B-10**. The importance of the topics respondents want regular updates on varied with age group, areas of residence and level of education (**See Table B-10**). On average, information on food prices and availability was highlighted as the most important topic that respondents want regular updates on. Also information on political developments, governance and corruption as well as agriculture food prices were topics that were regarded as important. However, youths regarded information on sporting events, job opportunities, food prices and availability as more important than political developments, governance and corruption, agriculture and farming prices regarded important by the adults. In the rural areas Agriculture and weather patterns stood out as important to guide the farming that is a predominant source of livelihood. In the urban areas, information on business tenders and opportunities, political developments, governance and corruption are topics urban residents want regular updates on. Sporting events was also a topic identified as important by most urban residents, however, Bulimia, a rural area ranked sporting events as an important topic more than food prices and availability. This could be attributed to by a higher proportion of youth respondents and it proximity to Botswana.

Other topics identified as important were religion and education. Respondents with low levels of education regard Agriculture and food availability and prices more important than all others.

4.4.2   News importance of news topics

In addition to being asked what topic interests them most, respondents were prompted on what importance they placed on specific issues that included: Climate change, Environment, Health, Education, Corruption, Economy, Service delivery, Human rights and Gender equality. **Figure 10** provides results of the analysis. In general over 60% of respondents found the topics very important to them. Interestingly less people (69%) regarded corruption as very important to them when compared to the other topics. Education and Health are the most important topics to respondents. There significant differences between categories of respondents (**See Table D-6**). More than double the number of youth respondents view environment, climate change, human rights, and service delivery as unimportant to them when compared to their adult counterparts. Climate change and environment are more important to rural than urban residents. Corruption, economy and service delivery are important in urban than rural areas (**See Table D-6**).

Figure 10: Importance of news topics
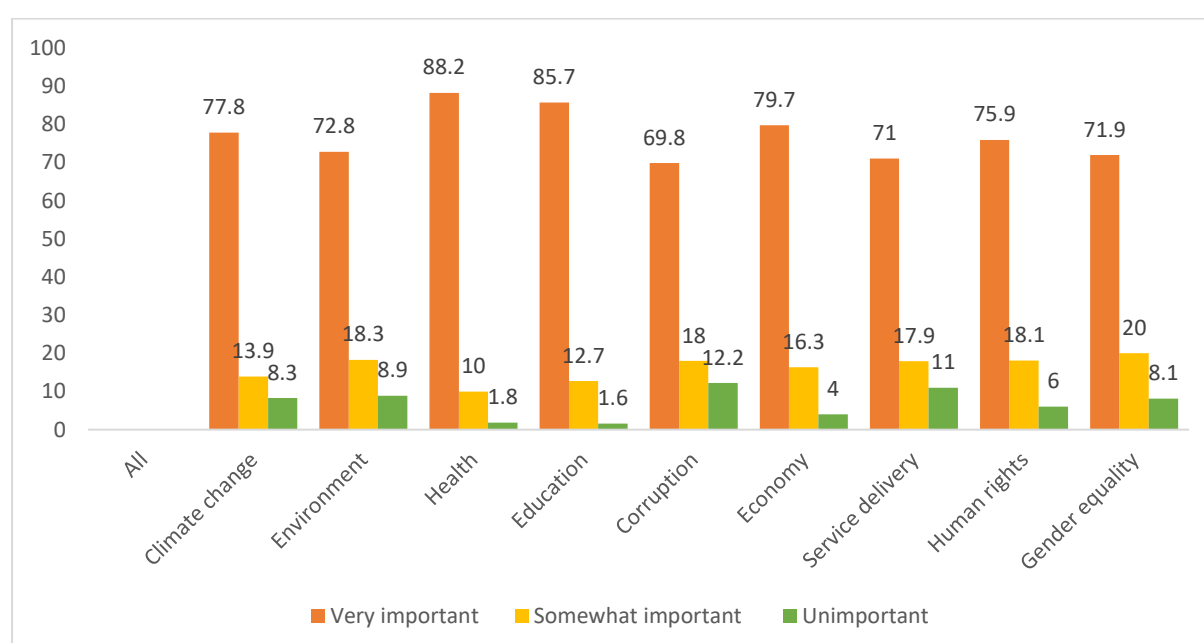
4.4.3   Factors undermining coverage of news of interest and importance

Capacity strengthening gaps exists in media reporting on technical areas

A rapid review of media content around a range of technical areas (climate change, environment, health, gender, human rights, corruption and accountability) showed that while there are examples of good reporting, competences in reporting on these subjects still need to be strengthened. The specific issues and concerns around the technical areas that the baseline focused on are discussed in the table below:

Sector	Capacity gaps and issues of concern	Potential focus areas
General	1. Lack of clarity of what the current discourse is and what the future issues of concern should be; and	

Sector	Capacity gaps and issues of concern	Potential focus areas
	2. Attempts to simplify issues for non-technical audiences sometimes leads in technical inaccuracies and misinformation.	
Climate change	1. Lack of clarity on terminology to apply e.g. climate change or global warming. 2. Inaccuracies in attributing hazards to climate change (when other factors may be more relevant) e.g. flash floods in Harare are due to poor drainage and not necessarily climate change. 3. Over-reliance on external resources at the expense of tapping into local research and reporting on its findings. 4. Challenges in communicating effectively to layman audiences while retaining meaning and intention.	1. Climate change adaptation as opposed to mitigation 2. Green growth and transition to low carbon economies 3. Building resilience to climate change
Environment	1. Lack of realistic opinion due to low practical exposure to issues; 2. Inability to identify issues as environmental rather than political in some cases (or vice versa); 3. Reports do not always use the best angle for writing articles leading to missed opportunities for impact; 4. Expert consultation limited; evidence insufficient at times; and 5. Quality of reporting needs enhancement.	1. Conflicts between water and land use especially agriculture and mining 2. The environmental cost of mining development 3. Global trends in natural resource governance
Health	1. Government censorship (direct and indirect) limits the quality of reporting 2. Inadequate view of issues (systems approach rather than focus on a single component) 3.	1. Economic costs of health challenges, current and future 2. Zoonotic diseases 3. Follow up on cholera
Gender	1. Some bias against LGBTI 2. Hesitant reporting on sexual rights 3. Narrow interpretation of gender	1. Rights of sexual minorities 2. Social media not fully utilised to promote gender equality and LGBTI rights
Human rights	1. Rights of ethnic minorities not fully considered, except for languages disappearing (alarmist) 2. Hesitation and fear to focus on documenting and reporting on issues of Gukurahundi with narrow appreciation of what the issues are, as well as the legacy of this era	1. Government stance on xenophobia 2. Follow up on victims of
Corruption and accountability	1. Peripheral and focuses at individuals who have fallen out with the government	1. Issue of government's new deals with foreign companies and

Sector	Capacity gaps and issues of concern	Potential focus areas
	2. Evidence mainly hearsay, no data or hard evidence of criminality 3. No media follow up on breaking stories, media plays a weak role in supporting advocacy against corruption 4. Using media to hold the government to account on national development targets	governments not adequately investigated 2. Role of Russia, China in economic development of Zimbabwe

Delivery of quality journalism is constrained by several factors operating at multiple scales, from the individual through to the macro-economy

Overall, respondents were negative to neutral with respect to the quality of journalism that serves them. There is recognition of some improvements in the sector, such as television and radio shows, as well as internet presence, which all speak to an enhancement in the standards. Simultaneously, as the media industry expands more players are being integrated, thereby diversifying media content, geographical coverage, etc. However, the development of an effective and accountable media with professional standards remains an ongoing challenge at national scale. Constraints to media development is at the level of the individual, organisation, institution and at the national macro-economy. The perceived challenges at each level were mapped out from interviews and focus groups and are shown in the table below:

Table 7: Some of the challenges to good journalism in Zimbabwe

Level	Challenges and Limitation
Individual	1. Most journalists not trained/without background in technical areas 2. Low salaries expose journalists to risk of bribery 3. Limited training in generic skills, including technological applications
Organisational	1. Limited collaboration with other organisations to share experiences and build awareness 2. Low salaries and inadequate incentives restrict performance 3. Media organisations not always financially sustainable, renders them vulnerable to exploitation 4. Manipulation of media institutions through advertisements 5. Limited coverage, few staff and inadequate equipment
Institutional	1. Soft self-regulatory systems inadequate for ensuring accountability and professional standards 2. Low public awareness of media monitoring institutions/watchdogs 3. Market research not a priority for most media institutions
Macroeconomic	1. Government censorship of the media 2. Legislation limits freedom of the media 3. Legislative reform takes time to complete and not always responsive to needs of the media for effectiveness

4.5 Media and Information Literacy of Zimbabweans

65.9% of the respondents, mentioned that they have consumed or come across news/information they perceived as false/inaccurate. Majority of this group (80%) were those with a level of education higher than secondary level. Their access to a larger number/diversity of sources they access for news and information, and higher literacy levels gives them capacities to judge the authenticity of news that the less educated do not have (**See Table C-2**).

Asked on the action taken upon identification of news/ information they regard as false, 54.3% reported that they ignored it, 32.9% shared with a friend and only 12.5% said they verify with other sources (**See Table C-3**). The trends emanating from responses indicated that ignoring of false news decreased with the increase in the level of education of the respondents though the disparities are not significantly large. More youths (73.6%) than adults (64.2%) mentioned that they verified news identified as false/inaccurate using other sources (excluding peers), and more urban residents than rural verify news with other sources. Peers also were identified as a source of verification of news identified as inaccurate and was recorded more prominent in adults and rural residents (See Table C-4). In general, the 12.5% that verify fake news do so through other news sources (68.3%), peers, family, friends (30.9%), local leadership (2.1%) and other means (1.2%).

The qualitative study confirmed these findings demonstrating that age, gender, education and location appear to have some association with respondents' self-rated ability to detect fake news (Table 8).

		Location	Average Score
Urban	Female youth	Gweru Urban	60%
	Female adults	Gweru Urban	60%
	Male youths	Gweru Urban	70%
	Male adults	Gweru Urban	70%
Rural	Female youth	Chimanimani	50%
	Female adults	Chimanimani	50%
	Male youth	Chimanimani	50%
	Male adults	Chimanimani	60%
Urban	Female youth	Bulawayo	60%
	Female adults	Bulawayo	70%
	Male youths	Bulawayo	80%
	Male adults	Bulawayo	70%
Rural	Female youth	Chiredzi	50%
	Female adults	Chiredzi	30%
	Male youth	Chiredzi	60%
	Male adults	Chiredzi	50%

Table 8: Respondents' self-rated level of confidence in detecting fake news
Analysis of field data from focus groups suggests that age (youth, adult), gender (male, female) and location of respondent (urban, rural) had some association with the level of confidence to identify fake news. Respondents in all sampled locations were asked to rate, out of a possible ten, how confident they were about their ability to detect a fake story. Results for four locations tabulated in Table 1 show that level of confidence ranged from low to moderately high. Even within the respective focus groups the survey noted significant differences with scores ranging from 30% to 90%.

Of the sixteen focus groups considered in this analysis, urban males self-reported the highest level of confidence in detection of fake news in comparison to the other groups. In fact, male youth in Bulawayo self-rated at 80% compared to a lowly 30% for female adults in rural Chiredzi. Across all locations, adult females were the least confident, and there was also little difference among female youth across geographical locations.
Despite positive appraisal of respondent capacity to detect fake news there is recognition that the process of assessing news is unclear and it is difficult to arrive at an accurate conclusion

Government's failure to enforce policies and regulations may inadvertently give an impression of policy pronouncements through the media being fake. Respondents argued that the government, through persistent failure to follow through its policies with enforcement, was perpetuating the image of news disseminated through official platforms, including the national broadcaster, as fake. The basis for determination of whether news was authentic, or fake is to see the changes as announced, and failure to observe such would qualify the "announcement" as fake. The situation was being further aggravated by the often-conflicting messages on the same policy by government representatives or backtracking on a policy position. The direct effect of such challenges in government communication and policy implementation appears to be loss of trust for government which, inadvertently, is contagious on the part of the media which disseminates these messages.

Respondents reported that it was difficult to tell if news were genuine or fake especially when some of the communication was coming from government sources. For example, official announcements that passports could now be collected turned out to be false as officials at local registry offices reported not being aware of this. In Goromonzi, young women interviewed were concerned that new digital technology could produce fake videos to support fake news being peddled.

Multiple approaches are used to determine authenticity of news, but these vary in efficacy

The determination of authenticity of news is done informally through employing a range of techniques. In urban areas male respondents reported sometimes resorting to reading more than one newspaper to achieve a balanced view on an issue. Typically, one would buy a government as well as a private newspaper to allow for fact checking. However, respondents also reported that there were cost implications associated with buying multiple newspapers and this was limiting the possibility of using this technique. Some of the common techniques that respondents are using to verify news for authenticity include the following:

1. *Analysis of grammatical and syntax structure of sentences:* fake news is often characterised by having grammatical errors and poor syntax. The language is often unprofessional with editorial mistakes.

We can only tell that news is true if what has been said happens. Our challenge with the radio is being used to peddle fake news. The radio told us that the US dollar would no longer be accepted by retailer but when I went to the shops people were trading freely and charging in US dollars and of course that means the radio lied to us. Also, when they speak of presidential farming inputs, they say they are for everyone but, only two people from a large community receive these. The government would say that the inputs are for all, but that broadcast is untrue because the inputs do not go to non-party members". **FGD with rural adults, Mutoko**

"We have seen videos of the late president Robert Mugabe and Tsvangirai both dancing to Tuku's music. The video claims that the video shows what is happening in the afterlife of the three. If people can go to this extent of peddling fake news, then how can we even imagine we will be able to spot fake news. Videos used to be our means of verification but now it seems we do not have any campus for verifying news". **FGD with young women, Goromonzi**

It's very difficult because you only find out after some days. However, nowadays we see videos on WhatsApp immediately after an incident of violence has been witnessed. Technology now enables us to know what is happening, but we can only see the truth after a while, and only then can we clearly identify news as fake or not. **Mixed youth, Goromonzi**

2. ***Waiting:*** this technique involves relying on delaying the judgement on whether news received is fake or genuine. After a few days the culmination of events can be used to arrive at a decision on whether news received was or was not genuine.

3. ***Use different media for triangulation:*** News received through one source may be verified by comparing with reports on the same issue from other sources. For example, when news is received via WhatsApp individuals may then search for similar articles online or verify through radio and television.

"We verify with other sources. If the news comes through WhatsApp and you get confirmation on Duta, then you know it's true. It depends on where you heard the news from but sometimes, we have noticed that lies will be a confirmation on the truth that is yet to be admitted by the government for example fuel price increases". **Male youth, Lupane State University.**

"The only way is to confirm by checking other sources, like if its news on WhatsApp you can verify even on radio". **Female youth, Epworth.**

"It depends on where you heard the news from but sometimes lies will be a confirmation on the truth that is yet to be admitted by the government, for example fuel price increases. It started off as fake news but eventually that turned out to be the truth". **Male adult, Entumbane, Bulawayo**

"I compare sources. Most of the forwarded news on WhatsApp is fake. I often wait for other people to confirm what I have heard. For me any news that comes from any source I must find a link that will make me believe it, but if there is no link then I assume it's fake. As a person I believe that to any news that has been said there is an element of truth to it". **Female youth, St. Pius, Bulawayo.**

4. ***Link to a functional reference:*** A letter without an official letterhead and signature is highly likely to be discarded as being fake. Official communication is often traceable to a named person and contact details are usually provided. However, the challenge with this technique is that official letters circulated via social media may be in formats that are not compatible with other phones, leading to those intending to share changing formats (e.g. screenshotting) and in the process cropping out those identifiers of genuine news such as the letterhead and signature. Official communication quite often comes with an official date stamp. According to a mixed group of adults in Epworth:

We are capable of spotting fake news although there is very little we can do about it. If you come across stories on WhatsApp without a reference or link to a website, corporate letters that are not signed or that do not have a stamp, then chances are you are reading a potentially fake story. Mixed adult group, Epworth.

5. ***Trusted individuals:*** Within communities are people known and trusted to provide genuine news. These individuals have the burden of verifying news on behalf of fellow community members. Such individuals are often community leaders or people of influence and, because of the need to maintain a good reputation within their communities, can only share that which they are certain of and subsequently point to what may be ingenuine. In Entumbane, for example, the local councillor was the trusted individual and peers were confident about her ability to decide on what was authentic and what was fake, especially so on matters to do with service delivery (water cuts, load shedding, crime, etc.)

6. *Eyewitness accounts:* Physical verification is possible for certain but not all types of news. Individuals may also rely on eyewitness accounts from people that they know and trust. There were several cited cases of inconsistencies between what the media reported and what the eyewitness accounts were. In Chishawasha, respondents reported that two people had been killed in a car collision contradicting media report that only one person had been killed. In Bulawayo, a journalist reported that a child had drowned in Richmond when in fact an eyewitness interviewed by this survey argued that she had gone to the scene of the accident and this was in Entumbane suburb. The eyewitness blamed the inaccuracies to the media's drive to break stories at the expense of fact checking.

> *"Yes, we can identify fake news. Stories that are one sided and that are not backed by empirical evidence are usually fake and they are targeted at tarnishing one's image. We once heard about a woman who was accusing Advocate Chamisa of sexually assaulting her while she was having her morning jog. Imagine what this does to someone's image! Such stories should be published after gathering facts that hold water".* **Adult male respondent, Goromonzi.**
>
> *"We are very capable of spotting fake news. On Studio 7 if there are allegations being levelled against an individual, Studio 7 calls the presumed guilty party and asks them questions whilst ZBC does not do this. ZBC will only report on the allegation, making it a lie by omission".* **Adult woman, Mutoko**

Media houses, through use of sensationalist headlines, are complicit in the spread of fake news

Both the private and state-owned media were perceived as playing a significant role in perpetuating fake news. In their bid to sell papers or increase hits on viewed online content or videos, some media operators appear to resort to using headlines that are not fully reflective of the stories reported but catch the eye of the targeted consumers. Respondents interviewed gave examples of instances where ordinary people sharing surnames with high profile people were given attention in headlines. On one account respondents cited a headline that "Chamisa arrested" referring to an individual living in the rural areas and accused of stock theft and not Chamisa the political leader. Someone reading such headlines could assume that reference is being made to the president of the MDC and may go on to spread that falsehood through word of mouth or via social media thereby perpetuating fake news. There are also instances where online publishers were simply copying tweets from prominent individuals and sharing that as news without any analysis or fact checking.

There is an indirect effect of 'no comment' and unilateral reporting on reliability of news

Respondents identified several cases where reports appeared to be one-sided with the other party involved in the story not being afforded the opportunity to provide their views. The idea that a reporter could publish a one-sided story and claim that the other party declined to comment or could not be reached by the time of going to press means that they can in fact tarnish certain individuals' reputations through publishing untruthful stories. There were cases where the other party was bound from commenting for legal reasons. In contrast, respondents in Goromonzi showed how thorough journalistic practice at Studio 7 would track down all parties and ensure they all have their say for listeners to receive both perspectives on the issue under discussion. Some of the comments raised by respondents are highlighted in the text box.

The prevalence of falsehoods in the media is perpetuating the narrative that all news is fake, it all depends on your perspective

There were strong convictions among respondents that media houses especially in the print media were captured by political interests and reported in ways that aimed at either showing their 'owners' favourably or painting negative picture of their 'foes'. This was reported as being prevalent in both state-owned and private media. In fact, some argued that there were cases where individual journalists had been paid to focus on assassinating certain individuals through their media reporting. The fact that most reporting was turning out to be false, suspicious or unbalanced was normalising falsehoods in journalism. One respondent remarked that "It's no longer news, its entertainment" implying that reports in the media were to be treated lightly as it was highly likely they would be inaccurate. This situation was being aided by the government through disseminating communication that was in contrast with the prevailing reality, as in the case of passports 'being available for collection'. Some respondents commented that:

"Any source that we can access is likely to have some level of bias, which means it is also likely to be untrue. It takes time to know if a news item was fake or not (sometimes)".

"It is very difficult to verify any news because even the official sources do propagate fake news. There is literally no campus for verification. Sometimes the impression is that with state owned publications they sieve the news before they release the news. Media houses disseminate conflicting messages, they often share news that satisfy their own interests. **Mixed adult FGD, Bulawayo**

Other respondents argued that fake news was becoming a culture in the media sector and this is being worsened by the emergence of citizen journalists who are seemingly unregulated.

There is no awareness of institutions or platforms for fact checking news and information

Respondents interviewed through focus groups were asked if they were aware of an institution that (1) provides support with fact checking news and information disseminated through the media and (2) institution where they could report cases they felt constituted unfair and irresponsible reporting. Across all focus groups conducted, there was no evidence of awareness of such institutions. In Bulawayo and Harare, for example,

some respondents mentioned that they thought such institutions existed, but they were not aware which ones these were and how they could be contacted. This speaks significantly to the invisibility of media support institutions especially at the consumer level.

There are significant individual costs associated with fake news in the media

Observations by the survey team during the baseline indicate that there are significant costs to individuals as a consequence of acting on fake news. At Mpilo Hospital in Bulawayo, thousands of applicants gathered at the hospital hoping to submit their applications for nursing positions, which, according to the hospital, did not exist. Information shared through WhatsApp had been fake and had circulated widely. One applicant interviewed by CIPE stated that she had spent at least $80 for her trip from Maphisa to Bulawayo, money which she had borrowed, only to be told that she had responded to a fake message.

Chronicle

Scores duped in Mpilo fake news . . . Prospective nurses gather for 'recruitment'

Andile Tshuma and Rutendo Ngara, Chronicle Reporters

BULAWAYO Provincial Affairs Minister Cde Judith Ncube yesterday castigated peddlers of fake news after scores of people gathered at Mpilo Central Hospital, responding to social media messages that there would be nurses' recruitment at the institution.

In an interview, Cde Ncube said the issue of fake news had detrimental effects and was negatively affecting the country.

The Minister, who recently spoke against unfair nurses' recruitment which saw most applicants from the southern region being sidelined, urged people to remain calm as she waited for a response from the health ministry to whom she wrote a letter seeking clarification on the matter.

4.6 Participation in Relevant Key Issues through Media

The baseline study captured the contribution of media to development through participation of individuals in community and national development debates. The core questions underpinning this component of the baseline were as follows:

1. To what extent do women and men, girls and boys participate in debates through media?
2. What are the barriers to women and men, girls' and boys' participation in debates on key development issues?
3. To what extent do women and men, girls and boys participate in debates on key developmental issues?
4. On what media platforms do these debates happen?

The key findings were as follows:

Communities targeted in this baseline survey have peripheral to no previous experience of participating in CSO driven community voice initiatives

The baseline study found mixed experiences with respect to participation of men, women and youth through debates on various media. In Gweru (Ward 10), for example, respondents concurred that were getting equal opportunities to debate developmental issues as men. Respondents in Gweru further emphasised that women were being offered preferential opportunities to speak even at public meetings. In contrast, in Epworth women were concerned that they did not know how to 'participate'. This issue emerged in other locations too, especially in enumeration areas that had no prior history of NGO interventions in development programming.

"We women must participate because we see everything first-hand. We have no idea about how to participate, we need to be educated on how. In the past we have sent messages to radio stations during certain programmes, but our messages or contributions were never read. We are not sure whether they were censored or were simply not high enough to be picked for discussion. Perhaps they don't see us as having anything to contribute as we are uneducated". **Urban Female Adults, Epworth**

"When Plan International comes, they take the women for training on health issues. In this area women do not care much about developmental issues you are talking about. There are a few women in our community who have been called to participate in radio programs. **Urban Female Adults, Epworth**

Platforms for women to engage exist but are limited in accessibility

Women interviewed were generally confident that spaces for women to participate did exist, but these were not in formats that were serving their direct interests. In fact, such platforms were to be found in district centres, towns and cities and less so in rural and remote areas. Even where present, several constraints undermined the proportion of women, men and youth with capability of participating in these various platforms. Some talk shows such as Mai Chisamba Show were considered family-oriented rather than for women. Across all platforms that had an electronic component, including TV, radio and mobile phone, power outages were undermining the possibility for and intensity of interactions.

"Mai Chisamba is an example of such participation in media. These days we do not see much of that, such discussions are happening on radio often. We do not engage on media platforms a lot, its usually the younger ladies that contribute on media platforms at a national scale".
Urban mixed adults Gweru

"Women are given time and opportunities to participate in developmental issues thanks to gender equality. However, there are some cases of gender discrimination even within us as women, we feel jealous of each other. Culturally, stigmatisation is another thing to blame. We do not have time to participate in media platforms due to vast roles as a mother and wife".
Rural adult women, Chiredzi

Women experience multiple barriers to participation in debates on key development issues

At project baseline there are concerns that in some of the sampled locations the effects of patriarchal systems on women's participation in debates around development are quite apparent. While in general women were considered as assets in the development process, a significant number of respondents questioned women's role, value and contribution to development arguing that their role was in the home, they could not be community leaders, and they had nothing to contribute, as they were often insufficiently educated. In rural Lupane, for example, male respondents argued that women were not supposed to participate in development process but be recipients of development outcomes. They argued that it was not appropriate for a woman to be in a position of leadership. A core tenet of their argument was that the recognition of women's rights had emasculated them (men) to an extent that they felt they had lost power and control over women, and that the law would always side with the women even where they felt the women were to take blame.

They are not supposed to partake in development debates. Most of the issues that involve women are not right, because for a woman to be in leadership is just not right. In terms of development, we agree, because it is now about knowledge. As we now considering degrees, well, we can now have them, but also suffer for it. We even heard on radio that women ae not compassionate, even your wife does not respect you! We cannot even discipline our children because we are told that we are abusing them. We have given up as men. So, we can't talk about women now, our country is like this because of women". **Adult males, Nligbwane Lupane**

"It is important for women and girls to participate in development issues, but the challenge is that most of the women here are not educated so they do not even know where to start when it comes to participation in the debates." What good thing can come from us uneducated village women of Meki...where do we even begin?" **Adult woman, Mutoko**

In contrast, women in most locations sampled were convinced that they were indeed key stakeholders in development debates. However, in most cases they had a handicap of different sorts, depending on location and social context that determined their extent of contribution. Lack of formal education was cited as the most prominent barrier to participation. This lack of education manifested through lack of self-confidence, illegibility for roles in community committees as well as lack of voice since locals privileged the voices of those with education.

"Yes. Women have a motherly love naturally they treat us all as their children, they take care of us all. Men are just self-centred; they can't feel for the next person as women do. Issue of gender inequality have always made men superior than women. Women take some issues or things as irrelevant". Rural Mixed Youths Chiredzi Ward 3

In Chiredzi youth respondents felt that women, because of their social and caring roles were well positioned to participate in development debates. They recognised gendered stereotypes as a barrier to their participation, but also noted that there were instances where women handled issues lightly.

Social norms and value systems appear to constrain communities from recognising and engaging youth in development process

Interviews particularly with youth respondents suggest that they are in most cases invisible within their communities in as much as development is concerned. In fact, in most cases they were only brought in as labourers once the planning processes had been completed. Youth felt that their culture was part of the handicap, as children cannot sit on the same table and debate with grown-ups on how development should happen. Some youths argued that even the skills they had learned in school which had potential benefits at community level remained underutilised. Alternative platforms via social media have been growing and accommodating youths, although debates tended to be national in nature as opposed to local. In Epworth, male youth argued that their female peers were being afforded more opportunities for participation simply based on gender, although young women's participation was not necessarily yielding any significant community results.

"Nothing for us without us, so we need to participate in things that happen in our area. We need to be involved as people from the area. Social media houses should involve youths from all areas especially when talking of maters that affect those areas. As youths from Njube we need the youths mostly to participate. Female youth, **St Pius, Bulawayo**

The elders do not acknowledge our contribution to the community. The Ndebele culture does not allow us to talk when with elders. If only we could be allowed to say a little of the things we know. **Mixed youths, Lupane State University**

There is a lack of sufficient institutions for developing leadership skills especially for youths

Barriers to development cited by respondents relate to lack of recognition of the importance of full community engagement as well as absence of strong and inclusive leadership. Ineffective leadership manifested through fear of participation, lack of ideas on how to engage various stakeholders, fear of speaking truth to power, and inadequate clout to bring varied opinions and personalities together to constitute community level platforms for development. In Gweru there were concerns that women were pulling each other down while others were too afraid to assume leadership roles. These leadership gaps were particularly true for those communities without history of NGO intervention, from which community engagement and mobilisation skills could have been developed.

"Yes, women and girls are participating. Fear, self-immolation and women pulling each other down are hindering women and girls from participating in Development debates in the media. Among the respondents only one has ever been on radio presenting on youth rights and young women's participation in politics on studio 7. All the other participants were afraid to participate". Urban female youth, Gweru

Gender mainstreaming in community development is a key gap which undermines role of women, youth (male and female) in community development

Community focus groups revealed that there were challenges with respect to how gender issues were being considered in the development processes at community level. Both male and female respondents concurred, for example, that there was not enough time for women to participate in community activities and still manage to fulfil their household chores. This observation potentially reflects challenge of failure to understand the effects of projects on

"It is important for women and girls to participate in development processes, but the challenge is that most of the women here are not educated so they do not even know where to start when it comes to participation in these debates. What good thing can come from us uneducated village women of Meki... where do we even begin?" **Urban female youth, Epworth**

women and men, as well as youths, and taking into account the social norms and values, entitlements and resources, as well as roles and responsibilities, meant that women and girls in some situations could not participate fully. In other contexts, as argued by a men's focus group in urban Bulawayo, the focus on girls and women was apparently at a cost to the male counterpart. One respondent was in the process of setting up an NGO that would focus on the boy child, on the argument that 'donors' obsession with girls and women is at a cost to developing the boy child and men in general'. Also, within the urban space it was argued that male councillors had limited awareness of gender equality.

> *"It is very important for women to lead. In most places where men are councillors, they do not seem to understand women's affairs. They end up asking out women or taking advantage of them".* **Adult women, Njube, Bulawayo**

Citizen voice is weak and lacking in many communities as platforms for participation and engagement are poorly developed

In rural locations community spaces for discussing development issues were organised around NGO interventions, of which the majority had a livelihood bias. It was not possible, however, for communities to use those spaces to discuss political or other developmental issues as NGOs did not want any involvement in politics. Issues to do with the media were therefore largely undiscussed. Women complained that their voices were not being heard and that they were not directly sought for their opinion outside NGO driven initiatives.

> *"Most of the time women are just not taken into consideration. We should be listened to as we are the ones that do all the work, we are the ones that are not employed yet we have certificates under our beds, and yet you find some tired old man who is no longer in a position to do anything being the one in charge just because he is a man. Of course, for now we are swallowing the bitter pill while he dictates to us".* Rural adult women, Lupane

In other locations, citizen voice was limited due to lack of willingness to participate on projects that did not yield direct and tangible benefits. NGO programmes led to direct household benefit but those focused on engagement and media did not appear to have the same effect. In Chiredzi the rural make respondents argued that women did not seem to care too much about media issues.

There is willingness to participate in development debates but the resources, platforms and leadership for this is often inadequate

The extent to which women, men and youth were able to participate in development issues varied by location and was shaped by several factors, including the socioeconomic situation, economic activities, social cohesion, social norms and values and leadership. The participation of women and girls, for example, was much higher on interventions that focused on these social groups, and fewer, mostly agricultural in nature, incorporated men and boys. Some women and men were concerned that where women had to interact externally, their roles at home limited the extent to which this could be done.

Development is for every individual in the community hence equal opportunities should be afforded to every individual of the community. However, there should be platforms that reach out for women. If woman is mostly found in home; programmes should go to their doorsteps to enable their full participation".
Mixed adults, Goromonzi

"Yes, women are given time and opportunities to participate in developmental issues thanks to gender equality. But they are some cases of gender discrimination, even within us as women, we feel jealousy of each other. Culturally stigmatisation is another thing to blame. we do not have time to participate in media platforms due to vast roles as a mother and wife" **Rural female adults Chiredzi Ward 3**

Despite gendered stereotypes about the roles of men and women in the development process, including engaging with ongoing debates, respondents recognised that the involvement of all genders was crucial. However, since platforms were often lacking in most cases, engagement of communities in development process was influenced by what the key issue of shared interest was, and media was not named as an issue. Dissenting voices, however, argued that men as heads of households were the ones that had the ultimate responsibility of participating in debates, on behalf of the family. In Nhembe, Tsholotsho, there were strong sentiments about women not participating in debates emanating from the men's focus groups.

Youth in Chimanimani argued to the contrary, positing that "women and girls should get chances to debate about issues to do with development in the media because there might be some hinges that men do not know or cannot address". Adult women in Mutoko mentioned that only a handful of women were participating in development issues in the media. They mentioned that a lot of women did not understand the importance of their participation. In fact, women argued that they "did not have the confidence that their participation would bring about any meaningful change".

"Women should not be involved in developmental issues; I am a provider so I should be the one participating".

"Mothers should not work; they should take a back seat in development".

"Women are weak, they cannot cut firewood, they can't. My wife is as good as my child, if she works on a project then who is going to sweep the house? If she spends time in meetings, then who will cook?"
Rural adult males, Tsholotsho

In Domboshava, men interviewed argued that although women were participating more nowadays, men had a better chance of bringing about change. Their arguments were also consistent with gendered stereotypes as follows:

"Women remain disadvantaged from fully participating in debates on development issues in the media because most of them do not have to smart phones that are compatible with WhatsApp. In most families, men are the breadwinners and buying a smart phone for their wives is not a priority given the economic situation, and this inhibits the participation of girls and women in media debates. Also, even for those that can afford, girls are given phones at a much later stage than boys because of fear that it might distract their schoolwork hence hindering their participation as well". **Rural mixed youth, Mutoko**

"Mostly unmarried women are on the forefront in participating because for married women it is seen as indecent, so they are restricted unlike single women. For men, it's like they are born leaders and naturally people and women look up to men, that's why men participate more".

"The reason why there is no Men's League is because it is thought to be a man's world so men by default dominate, hence the introduction of the women`s league to empower women who challenge men, therefore women who represent women are single and are usually given names. Married women have a limit in everything they do, they cannot even speak of sex, imagine hearing your wife spent the whole day telling people about sex! the man will be worried. That's why it's difficult even for the views of women in politics to be accepted by fellow women. They start questioning why she is not married, and if you could not even manage to have a house of your own how will you manage a country, marriage is key and an expectation for all to be accepted as normal according to our culture.; I as a man can be in a meeting until 12midnight but not a married woman" **Rural Male Adults Domboshava**

Access to mobile phones is a key enabler for participation

Considering that, physical spaces for civic engagement in the development process appeared limited and contested, electronic media emerges as a preferred alternative for many respondents. However, interactions via electronic media were mostly enabled by one's access to a mobile phone and data. In many cases, for example, rural respondents mentioned that they did not own smart phones but those that did often showed them videos and shared with them the latest updates on current affairs, gossip and comedy with them. Youths in both urban and rural areas were the most concerned group with regards to ownership of mobile phones for enabling access to various media. The issue of disadvantage was most prominently raised in Mutoko and by youth in Chimanimani.

"If young people get jobs, they will be able to afford to communicate via phones. Jobs will enhance more participation. Having more awareness can also help to improve the participation in media". **Rural male youth, Chimanimani**

Social media platforms are well-organised and may be guided through written rules for participation

The survey team examined the nature of the various social media platforms with selected respondents who were members in WhatsApp groups. The survey found that these groups were predominantly based on common social interest, often around single political affiliation with a few dissenting and critical voices and varying in levels of activity. High unemployment rates imply that most people have time to engage and participate fully in these electronic media spaces.

There are varying rules for joining, with some groups being closed and admission through prior approval by group administrators. For other groups, joining is by invitation and with the assumption that members will invite people they know as being 'safe'. Some groups have informal rules, whole other platforms share the rule book with new members. The administrators have a duty for ensuring compliance with these rules. For example, one men's group in Bulawayo deletes members that do not contribute to ongoing discussions. Other groups do not allow members to market goods or services.

Evidence to support discussions on these platforms may take several formats, including videos from YouTube, tweets, links to further information, audio files/recordings and attached documents and pictures. For some of the politically active groups there are concerns around infiltration by state security agents.

Respondents engage in different debates on different media platforms
The baseline study identified a wide range of debates that are possible on various media platform. On the analysed platform, including social media and community platforms, discussions ranged from service delivery; energy supply (fuel, electricity); politics; corruption; governance and electoral processes; sport as well as development issues and livelihoods. Talk shows on radio and TV discuss a range of issues including family; public health; social challenges; self-help and entrepreneurship. Radio forums also covered politics at national and local levels, economy, culture, religion, society, farming, mining and government policy. NGO and community-based organisation (CBO) driven platforms focused on a range of development issues, ranging from water, sanitation, hygiene, agriculture, rural and urban livelihoods, life skills, gender, electoral reform, among other topics. The mode of engagement in these platforms included live audiences participating in studio; phone in or text in messages; sending voice notes; 'street interviews' on camera and shared through platforms such as YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, among others.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Conclusion

The main source of news for majority of respondents was radio. However, of those that get their news on radio, most do not consider it as a credible source. Amongst various possible reasons to explain why this is so, it is most plausible that respondents have limited choices with regard to accessing news and information, since, according to this survey, ease of access is cited as the most important factor in deciding main news or information sources.

In both urban and rural contexts, news consumption is predominantly local news which may point to: 1) limited access to sources of international news; and 2) limited knowledge of international news sources. These two issues will need further investigation.

During times of crisis, it is evidenced that most respondents have limited sources of information, indicating that they tend to depend one source, and to a greater extent, peers only. This finding reveals structural bottlenecks in access to news and information during times of crisis especially rapid onset of crisis and demonstrate a potential challenge with fake news during these times. Rural areas, because of their limited diversity of sources, are the most affected in this regard. The only exception is during election period where peers and the radio are almost at par as the major sources of information.

Using a combination of sources of news or information enhances the adequacy or sufficiency of the news. Those using the TV, Radio and Peers have the highest percentages of respondents with sufficient news or information. This shows a serious inadequacy of news or information for those in the rural areas as they have little or no access to multiple sources of news or information such as TV.

Findings of the study show that the majority of respondents have come across fake news but were unable to verify the news' credibility. Over 50% of those that have come across fake news were not able to verify the credibility of the news or they just ignored the circulating information. This reveals a deep seated capacity weakness among consumers to verify fake news, the unavailability of resources for consumers to use for verification and even worse, a significant distribution of the fake news.

Findings show that the need and inclination to a specific topic or type of information and news increases with increase in level of education and lowest among rural residents. Those without any preferences consume what is at their disposal and have little or no influence over what they access or consume.

The qualitative survey demonstrates that the concept of news in Zimbabwe is narrow mainly influenced by the main narrative on the status of the country. This includes the economy, politics, prices and jobs. Perceptions of traditional media bias are strong for both private and public media and across rural and urban populations. This is contributing to mistrust of news and information disseminated through these channels and ultimately relegating news and information to entertainment rather actionable facts. For those without access to multiple source of media their ability to discern what is truth and what is fake issues is undermined. Mixed messages from the media are worsening the situation.

New media platforms, the internet and social media such as WhatsApp, are alternative sources of news and information. However, their use is limited by access to internet, costs associated with access,

and the prevalence of fake news on these platforms. WhatsApp is a widely used social media platform and depended on during times of crises but with reservations on authenticity of information.

Despite a high affinity for participating in development debates, participation and collective action on news is limited because of limited access to relevant platforms, poorly developed systems for citizen engagement, and limited leadership for such initiatives. Women particularly face multiple barriers to participation in debates on key development issues while youths' participation is undermined by social norms and value systems that make it a prerogative for adults. There are opportunities to enhance participation. The emergence of social media shows provides avenues for organising participation and citizen voice. Social media platforms are well-organised and may be guided through written rules for participation. However, access to mobile smart phones is a key enabler for participation.

Annexes

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Call For Expression
of Interest 4.7.19 pu

Annex 2: Quantitative Data Analysis Tables

Annex 2 Analysis
Tables.xlsx