



# MISA Zimbabwe@25: Reflections on media law reforms

## MISA Zimbabwe's enduring legacy

BY CRIS CHINAKA

**T**HE Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) has produced this special publication to commemorate 25 years of sterling work by its Zimbabwe chapter in helping to promote access to information, in defending press freedom and developing a plural media environment to serve the needs of the public in the region.

While there is still so much to do to advance this work, the commendable contribution by the MISA Zimbabwe family in advancing the interests of the larger public deserves to be celebrated.

This work has included the establishment of a flourishing network of active provincial membership structures to assist in protecting the media space, lobby against restrictive laws, upgrade skills and in growing the industry.

It has been a case of collective effort by many people, from the struggles of the founders of the regional body and successive office holders in national chapters, to the solidarity secured

from a wide range of structures across professional, community, social, economic and political sectors.

A quarter of a century after the establishment of MISA Zimbabwe, the media world has changed in many respects, and it continues to change.

MISA Zimbabwe, as a national chapter and as a member of the regional collective, needs to continue playing the role that it has been critically fulfilling over the years: offering strong thought and inspiring leadership in the implementation of impactful and practical programmes in the information and media sphere.

Other chapters in southern Africa have acknowledged this key contribution by electing the MISA Zimbabwe National Governing Council (NGC) chairperson, Golden Maunganidze, and national director, Tabani Moyo, as chairperson MISA Regional Governing Council and director MISA Regional, respectively.

This leadership responsibility means there is a need to take stock of the past and the present, and to look ahead to the challenges of the future.

This also means an ability to mobilise resources and skills to tackle these challenges, define and secure the complementary supporting roles that the state, the general public, the media, civil society, commerce and industry and other social forces, need to play in countering damaging trends threatening the information and media ecosystem, and working for a better system.

Besides the usual dark cloud that politics and monopolies cast on the media and information environment, the stratospheric rise in misinformation and disinformation, the devastation of the Covid-19 pandemic and the uncertainty arising from climate change, have compounded the crisis the world is facing.

This includes Zimbabwe and the Southern African region in which MISA is working.

While we are rightly celebrating yesterday's achievements, our major focus today should be on tomorrow.

The cause is simple and straightforward: to work for a media and information ecosystem that serves the greater public interest.



MISA Zimbabwe Board of Trustees chairperson Cris Chinaka

## MISA Zimbabwe@25: the milestones

BY GOLDEN MAUNGANIDZE

### Introduction

**O**UR lived reality today in which Zimbabwe now has private commercial radio stations and licensed television stations and community radio stations, was 25 years ago deemed inconceivable, if not utopian and risky.

These milestones and notable achievements are grounded through the vision of the men and women who launched the regional Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA Regional) in 1992 to promote free, independent, diverse and pluralistic media as envisaged in the 1991 Windhoek Declaration on Promoting Free and Independent Media.

The cascading effect of their vision and foresight gave birth to MISA Zimbabwe as we know it today as one of the regional chapters of the MISA Regional outfit, 25 years ago.

Today, MISA Zimbabwe has grown to being the lead media freedom, freedom of expression and access to information organisation whose footprints and achievements are easily traceable and historically recorded accordingly.

### Milestones

Constitutional provisions on media freedom, freedom of expression

- MISA Zimbabwe was the lead organisation in pushing for explicit constitutional provisions on freedom of expression, media freedom and citizens right to access to information.

- Through its incessant lobby and advocacy work in that regard, Zimbabwe's 2013 Constitution, for the first time since its replacement of the independence Lancaster House Constitution, now has explicit provisions on freedom of expression, media freedom and access to information provided for in terms of Sections 61 & 62 of the Constitution.



Golden Maunganidze

### Dismantling of AIPPA

The Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), enacted in 2002, had been used to harass, arrest, detain journalists and media workers as well as the closure of newspapers such as the *Tribune*.

Following the closures, MISA Zimbabwe launched the *Bring Back the Daily News* campaign as part of the spirited campaigns for the repealing of AIPPA as a draconian law that impinged on media freedom, freedom of expression, and ultimately, citizens right to access information through a free, independent and diverse media.

These advocacy and lobby campaigns, culminated in the dismantling of AIPPA, and enactment of the Freedom of Information Act in July 2020, to give effect and enforce the enjoyment of citizens right to access to information as provided by Section 62 of the Constitution.

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# Brand MISA Zimbabwe @25: delivering stakeholder values on free expression

BY TABANI MOYO

IN the historic month of August, 25 years ago, a great brand, the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Zimbabwe was birthed.

It is therefore a humbling and gratifying experience to be at the helm of this institution of great exploits that has consequentially and exceptionally shaped the regulatory environment, media freedom, access to information and safety and security of the media both in Zimbabwe and without.

In commemoration of this strategic milestone, MISA Zimbabwe re-affirms its commitment to retain the leadership mantle as it seeks to break new and higher ground in tackling the challenges of the future.

The commemorations are instructive and of great importance in these complex times of the COVID-19 pandemic that has disrupted the facets of life that define humanity.

Looking at the journey of the past 25 years, I'm glad to attest that MISA has survived, emerged as a market leader and a brand of strength through turning a multiplicity of challenges into opportunities.

In its time of existence, the brand interfaced and intervened in the fragile and repressive regulatory frameworks, attacks on journalists, closure

and bombing of newspapers, shrinking democratic space and changing communications ecosystems.

Throughout, the organisation discharged itself beyond reproach, setting and taking the local media industry and regional standards to dizzy heights while at it.

But the most uncelebrated, yet defining achievements have been the organisation's ability to incubate and facilitate for the birth of its sister organisations that have assumed their own life in the process.

This speaks to being the key player in the establishment of the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe (MAZ), The Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe (VMCZ), The Media Centre, the Zimbabwe Association of Community Radio Stations (ZACRAS) and the Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe (Now Media Monitors Zimbabwe).

In recognition of the role played by the organisation, the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ), awarded MISA Zimbabwe with special recognition as a strategic friend of the media on the 26th of September 2008. This was in recognition of the splendid work done by the organisation in assisting the union with the setting up of its secretariat.

Further, the organisation has been instrumental in the lead-



Tabani Moyo

ership development for the industry through grooming the young leaders of tomorrow.

The impact of MISA Zimbabwe has not remained landlocked by virtue of the country's physical location. It is now home to the Regional Secretariat hence the brand strength has far reaching impact beyond our borders.

To this, its contribution to the solution of the challenges impacting on human kind, has been acknowledged as it is now part of the governing boards of the Southern Africa Internet Governance Forum (SAIFG); IFEX, a global network of more than 100 organisations defending freedom of expression, and the Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD).

As such it is key to note some of the indelible footprints from the long journey travelled thus far:

- A 100% success story through the Media Defence Fund.
- Pioneered the multistakeholder approach towards internet governance in September 2015.
- Led stakeholders towards the establishment of the Police & Media Action Plan in 2016.
- Successfully challenged criminal defamation in 2016.
- Successfully challenged a week long internet shutdown in 2019 through the courts.
- Influenced the explicit guarantee of rights to privacy, media freedom & freedom of expression and access to information in the Constitution through Sections 57,61 and 62, respectively
- Challenged the police to stop attacks on the media through the courts in 2020 leading to a court interdict to that effect.
- Pioneered the community radio movement in Zimbabwe and the subsequent literacy on the subject matter.
- Influenced the current opening up of the broad-

casting industry having run the *Free the Airwaves Campaign* for almost two decades challenging Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation's monopoly.

- Built a strong access to information movement in Zimbabwe which brings together citizens to actively participate in the law making processes and holding the government accountable.
- Hosting the regional secretariat, thereby influencing the agenda for media freedom, access to information and expression in the region and beyond, among others.

As the brand MISA casts its eyes far into the future, 10 years ahead, it does so with the aim to address the complexities borne of the ever-changing contexts in the realm of policy; media economics; expression online and offline; mis/ dis-information; safety and security of the media; sustainability of the media, and media capture, among other challenges.

This is due to the confluence of a multiplicity of factors such as the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic; stifling of online expression under the guise of controlling the pandemic by the majority of Southern African countries.

In addition, a lingering and permeating threat exists on the future of the media in the context of the intricate challenges posed by pandemics, climate change, natural disasters, gender mainstreaming and the role of big tech companies vis-à-vis the quest for supporting and

defending a resilient media.

Faced with these existential challenges, MISA Zimbabwe thus remains guided and inspired by the long-standing principles of its founding fathers and mothers who met 30 years ago and articulated their vision and value systems, which culminated in the adoption of the Windhoek Declaration in 1991.

Inspired by these principles and values, MISA Zimbabwe's Board of Trustees chairperson, Cris Chinaka on the 20th of August 2015, said:

"In rebranding MISA Zimbabwe, we are inspired by three strategic and visionary outcomes that will see the organisation evolving into a knowledge institution, market leader and an expertise-centred institution."

In the next 10 years, the organisation is focused on remaining as a continuously learning organisation that leads on many fronts. We thus aim to be a cut above the rest as we stand tall on the shoulders of the giants that successfully marshalled the organisation through complex times over the years through their diligent leadership, at both secretariat and governance levels.

The organisation is thus anchored on three major guiding pillars: thought leadership; expertise and market leadership.

Happy silver jubilee! To many more years of leadership!

**Tabani Moyo is the regional director of MISA and national director of MISA Zimbabwe.**

## MISA Zimbabwe@25: the milestones

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### Media Defence Fund

The Media Defence Fund falls within the scope of the Legal Support programme area. This programme is designed to offer legal assistance to journalists, media workers and institutions, that are either arrested or detained during the course of their lawful professional duties, and even extends to legal representation if the matter goes to trial.

MISA Zimbabwe has over the years recorded numerous successes in the cases where it deployed lawyers to offer legal representation to journalists or media workers that would have been arrested or unlawfully detained during the course of their work.

In the majority of the cases, deployed lawyers have always managed to secure the release of the detained journalists, with very few of the cases going to trial.

A recent case is that of Tawanda Muchehiwa, nephew of *ZimLive* editor, Mduduzi Mathuthu, following his arrest when the police raided Mathuthu's home in Bulawayo on 30 July 2020.

Muchehiwa had been missing since 30 July 2020 following his arrest by the police, with his then known location being that of having been in their custody at Bulawayo Central Police Station.

Following a habeas corpus application by MISA Zimbabwe through lawyer Ngobani Sithole, High Court judge Justice Makonese, on 1 August 2020, ordered the police to investigate Muchehiwa's whereabouts and produce the outcome to the Magistrates Court at Tredgold Building in Bulawayo within 72 hours.

Muchehiwa was later found that evening on 1 August 2020 around 2200hr after he was 'dropped off' at his place of residence by suspected state security agents. On 4 August 2020, Muchehiwa subsequently appeared before the magistrates court in Zimbabwe's second city of Bulawayo in compliance with the directive by the High Court judge.

*NewsDay* journalist Rex Mphisa and *Zimpapers* sales representative Charles Marerwa were on 27 August 2020 acquitted by magistrate Ania Chimweta on charges of violating the COVID-19 regulations.

The magistrate ruled that the State had failed to prove its case beyond any reasonable doubt.

Mphisa and Marerwa were arrested on 15 May 2020 in Dulivhadzimu, in Zimbabwe's southern

border town of Beitbridge. Mphisa and Marerwa, who were on free bail, were represented by lawyer, Jabulani Mzinyathi, who was engaged by MISA Zimbabwe.

### Free the Airwaves Campaign

The licensing of the first ever community radio stations and commercial television stations is in line with the African Charter on Broadcasting's three-tier system, comprising public, commercial and community broadcasting, that MISA Zimbabwe, together with the Zimbabwe Association of Community Radio Stations (ZACRAS), has incessantly been advocating for over the years.

This is the result of our protracted and sustained *Free the Airwaves Campaign*, during which MISA Zimbabwe established preparatory Community Radio Initiatives throughout the country. For instance, the newly licensed *Ntete Manama Community Radio Trust* in Matabeleland South province, is one such initiative.

### Self regulation of the media

The first move in dismantling the restrictive Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act which was the weapon of choice in harassing, threatening and arresting journalists which saw the closure of the *Daily News* and *The Tribune* newspapers, was through the establishment of the Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe.

MISA Zimbabwe spearheaded the nationwide mobilisation and consultations with key stakeholders together with the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists on the need for self-regulation of the media.

This culminated in the massive endorsement of self-regulation of the media as a counter measure against the then statutory Media and Information Commission.

The endorsements gave birth to the VMCZ as the self-regulatory media body amid the increasing crescendo for the repeal of AIPPA and the subsequent death of the statutory Media and Information Commission.

### Court cases

Another key component of the Legal Support programme, is that of strategic litigation.

This is informed by MISA Zimbabwe's monitoring of media freedom violations and issuance of alerts and analysis of the legal operating environment and the laws that are in place and how they

impact on the exercise and enjoyment of the right to media freedom, freedom of expression and citizens' right to access to information as provided for in the Constitution.

The Constitutional Court in February 2016, granted an application by MISA Zimbabwe seeking confirmation of the fact that criminal defamation was no longer part of the law. MISA had argued that Section 96 Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act (which had been used to arrest several journalists), was invalid from the time of its enactment in 2004. Criminal defamation was then effectively struck off the statutes.

High Court judge Justice Owen Tagu on 21 January 2019 ruled that the Minister of State in the President's Office Responsible for National Security does not have the authority to issue any directives in terms of the Interception of Communications Act.

The court ruling followed a court challenge mounted by MISA Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights following directives issued by Minister Owen Ncube to shut down the Internet in Zimbabwe.

The Interception of Communications Act is one of 12 Acts directly administered by the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe. The President does have the right to assign any other Cabinet members to act on his behalf to administer any of these 12 Acts.

Justice Tagu agreed with Advocate Matinenga's submission that the Minister was not assigned with any authority to issue such directives by the President. He ruled that the directives issued in the minister's name be set aside as they were unlawful.

The decision, allowed mobile network operators and Internet service providers to restore full Internet access including access to social media applications and websites. Access to applications such as *WhatsApp* and *Facebook* had been restricted since the morning of Tuesday, 15 January 2019.

High Court judge Justice Mafusire on 24 April 2020 ordered the Ministry of Health and Child Care and the Ministry of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services to promote citizens' access to information pertaining to the Coronavirus. This followed an urgent chamber application that was filed by MISA Zimbabwe, represented by lawyer Rudo Magundani of Scanlen and Holder. The Ministry of Health and Child Care and

the Ministry of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services, were cited respectively as first and second respondents in the matter.

Zimbabwe High Court judge Justice Manzanu on 20 April 2020 ordered the police and other law enforcement agencies charged with enforcing the COVID-19 lockdown not to arrest, detain or interfere "in any unnecessary way" with the work of journalists. This followed an urgent chamber application that was filed by MISA Zimbabwe (first applicant), and journalist Panashe Makufa (second applicant), against the arrests and harassment of journalists by police officers during the lockdown.

The Commissioner-General of Police and the Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC) were cited, respectively, as the first and second respondents in the application filed by the applicants' lawyer Chris Mhike.

The High Court granted an order in favour of MISA Zimbabwe interdicting Econet Wireless Zimbabwe and other cited respondents from implementing a police warrant seeking information on the mobile phone operator's transactions.

High Court judge Justice Tawanda Chitapi granted the provisional order in Harare on 24 July 2020 in favour of the applicants, MISA Zimbabwe, first applicant, and the Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights), second applicant.

The court challenge was mounted to protect the right to privacy as provided for in terms of Section 57 of the Constitution.

These milestones and achievement, among several others, have seen MISA Zimbabwe assuming the regional leadership mantle following my election as Chairperson of the MISA Regional Governing Council while national director, Tabani Moyo, now also doubles as the Regional Director.

The occasion of our 25th anniversary thus gives us opportunity to reflect and chart and pave the path on where we want to get - how and when.

Suffice to say, it has been a long arduous journey fraught with challenges and immense leadership responsibilities, but nonetheless with the results to show for it, 25 years later!

**Golden Maunganidze, Chairperson MISA Regional and MISA Zimbabwe.**



# 25 years in defence of effective press freedom

BY GEOFFREY NYAROTA

**A**FORERUNNER of the famous Windhoek Declaration was a small media seminar held on the banks of the Chobe River in northern Botswana in April 1989.

This gathering brought together journalists representing the southern African region's then fledgling independent press together with representatives of a global network of non-governmental organisations working to defend and promote freedom of the press and the right of citizens to freedom of expression.

Zimbabwe was represented at Chobe by the late Onesimo Makani Kabweza and myself. Kabweza was then the fiery editor of a Gweru-based monthly Catholic publication, *Moto Magazine*. He was in the forefront of giving voice to critics of President Robert Mugabe in the early days of Zimbabwe's independence.

Among the foreign delegates present at Chobe was a prominent Swedish journalist and author, Per Wastberg. He professed to be a long-time friend of President Mugabe, going back to the period of the latter's 10-year incarceration.

By the time we met at Chobe, Wastberg, who took care of the late Sally Mugabe in Stockholm during her husband's imprisonment, had become a strong critic of his former friend.

Condemning his intolerance of criticism and of a free press, Wastberg described Mugabe as a "freedom fighter who knew not how to guard the freedom, once the fight was over."

Those of us from Zimbabwe, where we experienced the consequences of Mugabe's intolerance, drew inspiration from Wastberg.

It was the intolerance of the first generation of southern Africa's liberation Presidents which inspired the journalists of the fledgling regional independent press to rally together to formulate a strategy which culminated in the landmark Windhoek Declaration.

On 29 April, 1991, the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), convened a seminar in the Namibian capital, Windhoek, at which Kabweza and I joined fellow African journalists in discussing the principles of protecting the independence of the press from interference by politicians, on the one hand, and economic interests, on the other.

This was during an era when major media outlets in southern Africa operated under the strict control of virtual dictatorship.

The outcome of the deliberations was the signing of the Windhoek Declaration on 3 May and the formation, subsequently, of the regional Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA).

The declaration issued by the African journalists set out the principles committed to a free press, free access to information and media diversity and pluralism. In their resolutions, participants enjoined African governments to provide constitutional guarantees to freedom of the press and association.

MISA was officially launched in September 1992 to focus primarily on the need to promote free, independent and pluralistic media, as envisaged in the declaration.

Among the leading journalists who spearheaded the formation of MISA were Fernando Goncalves of Angola, Methaetsile Leepile of Botswana, Alaudin Osman of Malawi, Fernando Lima of Mozambique, Govin Reddy from South Africa, Gwen Lister of Namibia, Ndimara Tegembagwe of Tanzania, Fred M'membe of Zambia, as well as Kabweza and myself, representing Zimbabwe.

Our goal was to fight for genuine press freedom and media diversity in our respective countries. In due course new privately owned newspapers were launched, while existing ones were reinforced.

They included Leepile's *Mmegi* in Botswana, *The Nation* in Malawi, *Mediacoop* in Mozambique and Lister's *The Namibian* in Windhoek. In Zambia, M'membe launched *The Post*, while in Harare, we established *The Daily News*, of which I became the founding editor-in-chief.

A total of 11 chapters were established in the SADC member states through which MISA operated at national level. While new newspapers took root or existing ones strengthened, the newly established national chapters lobbied for greater press freedom. There have since been crucial changes on the regional media landscape over the past 30 years.

In Zimbabwe the local chapter has, since its formation in 1996, been active in advocacy work, while pushing for constitutional reforms. MISA Zimbabwe has positioned itself as an important player in the struggle to enhance the free flow of information in both the print and broadcast industries.

It has challenged draconian legislation and scored a major success through the enactment of the Freedom of Information Act in 2020. This replaced the reprehensible Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA).

While MISA Zimbabwe has done a commendable job in

lobbying for press freedom, advances in media technology have contributed to that development. A major contribution has been the advent of the internet and social media.

While in 1991 the major media outlets were limited to print and electronic, today's government is hard put to exercise control over social media outlets, which now reign supreme, accompanied by the problem of disinformation.

Meanwhile, concerns continue to rise with regard to the decline in the quality of professional journalism as fake news prevails. Such concerns are compounded by serious polarisation in the media, particularly between the private and the State owned outlets.

As MISA Zimbabwe celebrates 25 years in defence of press freedom, the greatest concern which now counteracts the successes achieved by MISA is the burgeoning of the scourge of media capture. This development negates the lofty ideals of the Windhoek Declaration.

Over recent years there has been a discernible upsurge in the momentum on the part of some stakeholders in the trend towards seeking to establish effective control and ownership of both the private and public media. This narrow-minded development is a total betrayal of the Windhoek Declaration.

Media capture seeks to preserve or promote the political or commercial interests or influence of a few politicians and corporate players.

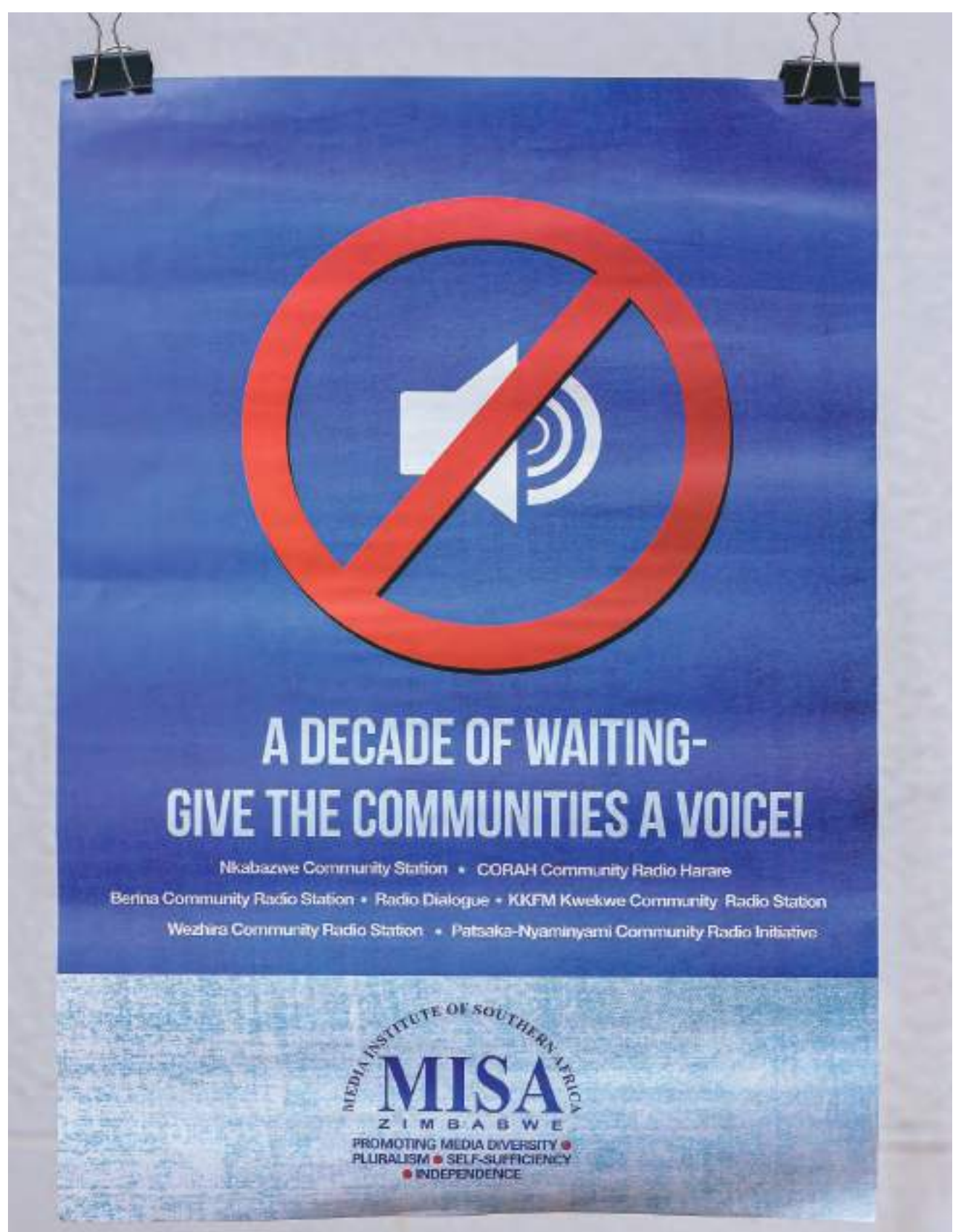
Not only must any efforts at media capture, some of them embroiled in outright corruption, be fiercely resisted; they must be exterminated. MISA must rise to the challenge of such new initiatives by devising strategies to combat any counter-productive media manipulation.



Geoffrey Nyarota

One effective strategy would be to inculcate among journalists the practice of powerful investigative reporting, as well as that of ethical journalism.

Geoffrey Nyarota is a founder member of the regional MISA and the founding chairperson of MISA Zimbabwe. He is also the founding chairperson of the Zimbabwe National Editors' Forum.





# Regional media advocacy unimaginable without MISA

BY REYHANA MASTERS

**T**HERE is so much to think about and to be appreciative of – when looking back at what was – and celebrating what is – 25 years of the Media Institute of Southern Africa Zimbabwe Chapter.

For me, the most important thing, is the recognition that the media advocacy landscape of southern Africa is unimaginable without the presence of the various chapters of the MISA.

Together as chapters, the MISA regional network is an institution that is part of the DNA of the region's freedom of expression, access to information and media freedom terrain.

While the chapters are able to act independently of each other, and focus their programming based on the needs and issues within their localities, there is power in regional solidarity. The advocacy initiatives built through the MISA network is what makes the work so powerful and the institution's presence so necessary.

You only have to think back to the SADC Journalists Under Fire campaign conceptualised two decades ago and primarily based on the mounting violations against journalists, putting them, and particularly, the Zimbabwean media at risk.

At the time it was ground-breaking for southern Africa.

What made the SADC Journalists Under Fire stand out, was that it was strong, emotive and it personalised the plight of journalists. More importantly, it was based on the consolidation of MISA's media monitoring work and shaped the advocacy component that was supported by the research and monitoring that MISA chapters were undertaking.

Through the regional secretariat, the work was elevated and built into a strong, solid and powerful campaign. This further strengthened MISA's position to take cases to the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights.

In fact it helped transform MISA's relationship with two of the most decisive continental bodies at the time – the Southern African Development Community and the AU through the annual ACHPR sessions.

This relationship with the ACHPR continues to be cultivated by the current secretariat of MISA Zimbabwe and this will hold it in good stead as we move into the future.

Bringing the issues to these two bodies is something that was and still is so successfully managed by MISA Zimbabwe. In fact strategic litigation and the strong continental advocacy and lobbying which the organisation is so successful at, is a strength that must be constantly built upon.

The very existence of MISA Zimbabwe as an organisation that builds on legal challenges around media freedom and freedom of expression combined with strong continental advocacy and lobbying campaigns is critical for the attainment of justice in the region.

But with this work comes responsibility. That responsibility is twofold. Advocacy that brings about change is a long term commitment that requires persistency and consistency. That is not always understood or acknowledged.

While it may look as though the recent granting of additional radio licences happened overnight, it is the result of commitment that built upon work started two decades ago when the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA), came into being.

Through the tireless effort of MISA Zimbabwe and numerous strategic partners – a process that eventually gave birth to ZACRAS (Zimbabwe Association of Community Radio Stations), the airwaves have opened. While we know that even this process has its flaws, it is certainly an improvement on what existed before.

Many of the struggles we are grappling



Reyhana Masters

with today are similar to the battles that I remember fighting when I was still chairperson of MISA Zimbabwe.

Being the chairperson of the MISA Zimbabwe chapter in the early 2000s and working with colleagues through the highly politicised, volatile and what was the onset of exceedingly polarised media landscape, was challenging.

When I reflect on that period, I realise that it taught me so much. It was essentially a life transforming experience.

It provided me with an aha! moment, during which I clearly understood that the battle for media freedom and freedom of expression is not for the faint hearted. More than anything, I realised that strong and effective leadership is an integral part of the fight for justice.

To charter a course that upholds media freedom and freedom of expression, there is a need for leadership that embodies integrity, courage, fortitude and wisdom.

Those who take on positions in the governing council have to support a secretariat that works tirelessly, often with little reward or recognition and needs to be bolstered by the confidence and trust of the trustees.

They work under difficult circumstances in a precarious environment. So a strong and effective leadership is an integral part of the fight for justice.

MISA Zimbabwe as well as the various chapters, cannot effect change around media freedom, freedom of expression and access to information on their own. There should be acknowledgment that there is much goodwill – nationally, regionally and globally.

It is up to the leadership at both - secretariat and board level - to continue with these collaborative process in a way that will contribute to a lasting and impactful trajectory that can be traced back to MISA and the elevated position it holds.

Congratulations on 25 years of commendable work and all the best for the next 25.

**Reyhana Masters is a journalist and the first female (former) chairperson of MISA Zimbabwe and a passionate defender of media freedom, access to information and freedom of expression.**

# New strategies key in the struggle and defence of media freedom in the region

BY LOUGHTY DUBE

**A**S the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA Zimbabwe) turns 25 years, there are key milestones that the organisation should strive to celebrate while leveraging on lessons learnt from bygone years.

Key reflections and critical decisions have to be made to continue the struggle for media freedom and the defence of free expression in Zimbabwe and in the region.

I will reflect on my role within the MISA Zimbabwe family when I took up leadership roles when I was elected MISA Zimbabwe deputy chairperson in 2004 and later took over the chairmanship of the organisation in 2007 up until 2012.

It is during this time that Zimbabwe faced its critical moments that defined the country as the most repressive in the region due to its fascist media laws that were used to shut down independent media while the same laws were used to silence critics and arrest hordes of journalists on trumped up charges.

It is during these trying times that I had the privilege of being the only chairperson to have worked with three different directors namely; Takura Zhangazha, Rashweat Mukundu and Nhlanhla Ngwenya.

Trying times these were.

The key challenges during the period I joined the MISA Zimbabwe leadership was to deal with challenges around the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), that was being used to arrest and intimidate the media fraternity.

Thinking outside the box, my board, and the secretariat, was instrumental in setting up the Media Defence Fund, and the Provincial Advocacy Committees that were critical in coordinating the work of MISA Zimbabwe. The committees were incorporated into the MISA Zimbabwe structures and were officially recognised as key cogs in the fight for media freedom and freedom of expression.

It is during that time that MISA Zimbabwe also played a pivotal role in the setting up and establishment of critical and vital media support organisations that played an important role in supporting MISA Zimbabwe's advocacy for a free media in Zimbabwe.

Organisations that were established include the Media Centre, Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe (MMPZ), Media Alliance of Zimbabwe (MAZ) and the Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe (VMCZ), where I am currently employed as the executive director.

These organisations played a complimentary role and targeted sectors of the media to lobby and advocate for reforms. The organisations increased the voices for media reform and created partnerships and unity in the different media spheres.

It is also during this period that we expanded our lobby and advocacy to a regional level through participating in the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR) sessions where we interacted face to face with government officials and highlighted human rights challenges facing citizens and the media in Zimbabwe.

MISA Zimbabwe during that time was a thorn in the face as the organisation was always on a collision course with government due to the former's highlighting of media violations perpetrated by the government.

At that time I took my advocacy and lobby for media freedom to a higher level as I was elected into the MISA Regional Governing Council (RGC), where I later became the Deputy Chairperson and a member of the Management Committee.

Later, over the years, I was appointed into the MISA Trust Fund Board (TFB), the highest decision making body in the region, a position I hold to date.

During my tenure as chairperson, it was more like a cat and mouse relationship where even the talk in government circles was to equate MISA to a regime change institution, but that perception has changed now as MISA Zimbabwe is now consulted on a variety of media reform issues and still continues in its lobby and advocacy for media freedoms.

The focal and rallying point during my tenure as chairperson, were the calls for the unbanning of the popular *Daily News* that had earlier been banned under the infamous AIPPA. The Tribune, another independent paper, also suffered the same fate as the *Daily News* as government increased attacks against independent media.

One very key success during my tenure was to ensure that we did not have journalists wallowing in prison at any given time as a result of the many cases of arrests that were taking place during that time.

It is also during that time that the Media Lawyers Network was established together with the capacity building of lawyers to providing legal aid to journalists in distress. It was during that time that the MISA Zimbabwe Media Defence Fund was strengthened and fortified in order to protect journalists who were being purged through arrests.

It is during this period that we also began campaigns around the unbanning of the *Daily News*. Protests against the *Daily News* banning were popularised during this period as campaigns were held inside and outside Zimbabwe.

The struggle has been long and protracted and MISA Zimbabwe will need to redefining strategies to continue the fight and rid the region of bad media policies and laws that infringe on citizens' rights.

The struggle is still on.....*Aluta Continua!*

**Loughty Dube is a former chairperson of MISA Zimbabwe and currently executive director of the Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe. He also serves on the MISA Regional Trust Fund Board.**



Loughty Dube



# Challenges and projections for MISA Zimbabwe gazing into the future

BY SARAH CHIUMBU

I joined MISA Zimbabwe in August 1997 as Information and Research Officer.

The organisation was then in its infancy with only three people – the then director, the late Vincent Chikwari, Administrator, Annie Musodza, and myself. We made up the first Secretariat of the MISA Zimbabwe chapter.

The organisation was then sharing offices with the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions. With support from a vibrant board led by Geoff Nyarota and the MISA Regional Office, the MISA Zimbabwe entity, although small, established strong advocacy roots that shape the organisation today.

The organisation moved to New Africa Building and continued to grow in leaps and bounds. With limited resources, the three staff members showed dedication and resilience in the face of state harassment.

I recall Annie and myself walking the breadth of Harare to deliver invitation letters for the various workshops that MISA held. Many people and organisations did not have access to emails. Hence invitation letters were delivered in person.

As surprising as this sounds, the Internet was still novel, and we did not know how to use it effectively. I gave birth to my son in September 1998 and only spent three weeks on maternity leave as I had to return to work. Such was our dedication!

Three directors later (Vincent Chikwari, Dr Chifamba and Barney Mapondera), I became the first female national director of MISA Zimbabwe in 2000. I stayed in this position till my departure in July 2004.

Critical developments characterised the years between 1997 and 2004: the growth of the regional advocacy campaigns for freedom of expression, the building of local networks with organisations such as the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ), the Federation of African Media Women Zimbabwe (FAMWZ), Zimbabwe National Editors Forum, and the Independent Journalists Association of Zimbabwe. This collaboration planted the seeds of the current Media Alliance of Zimbabwe (MAZ).

MISA Zimbabwe also joined forces with the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (CCJPZ) to establish the Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe (MMPZ), an entity to promote responsible journalism through monitoring and analysis of the news and current affairs output on domestic radio and television, and in the print media.

These were exciting times as we built beneficial coalitions nationally and regionally to entrench freedom of expression and media freedom. There were innovative campaigns, workshops, seminars, training programmes and marches.

Who can forget the famous silent march to Parliament in 2002?

The police pounced on the protesters and arrested several people. Thanks to the Media Defence Fund, which MISA Zimbabwe had set up, legal assistance was offered to all those detained.

Most of us went into hiding for some days after this event. Still, the spirit of solidarity kept us going in the face of growing authoritarianism and the promulgation of more draconian laws.

In the early 2000s, MISA-Zimbabwe was joined by energetic young people – Rashweat Mukundu, Takura Zhangazha, Wilbert Mandinde and Koliwe Nyoni. They brought innovative ideas to grow the organisation; the key one relates to decentralising the work of MISA Zimbabwe to 10 of the country's provinces through the creation of Advocacy Committees.

The early MISA Zimbabwe story is not complete without recognising the role played by women. There was a time when the organisation was led by women – Reyhana Masters as Chairperson, Annie Musodza (and later Abigail Gamanya), and myself.

Reyhana's conceptualising talents, Abigail's fearless character, Annie's administrative skills and my diplomatic approach led to outstanding achievements. One of



Sarah Chiumbu

the accomplishments that I am proud of was buying the MISA House at 84 McChlery Drive Eastlea, Harare, through a SIDA grant.

Another woman also played a key role here – Janah Ncube, who assisted us in preparing the proposal to funders. The SIDA grant also purchased the first MISA Zimbabwe car that came in a curious ruby pink! (nothing to do with the female power at the organisation!).

Our beloved and kindly driver, the now

late Paul Zaru, stood out as he drove the pink car around Harare and the country. The MISA House also brought in Joseph Makiyi, who came in as Chef, but later morphed into several valuable roles. He became the cornerstone of MISA House.

I left MISA Zimbabwe in July 2004 with a heavy heart and passed the baton to Rashweat Mukundu, who became the youngest National Director at 26 years old. I knew that I was living the organisation in good hands, and as the years passed, MISA Zimbabwe grew from strength to strength.

Rashweat turned over the directorship to Takura Zhangazha, who brought deep thinking and heightened advocacy to the organisation. Takura passed on the (advocacy) role to Tabani Moyo, the resourceful director who has re-branded MISA Zimbabwe and placed it on the world map.

Under the leadership of these three young men, with the excellent assistance of Nyasha Nyakunu, then MISA Zimbabwe senior programmes officer, the organisation became adept at lobbying key stakeholders, notably the Parliament of Zimbabwe through its relevant Portfolio Committees.

Over the years, MISA Zimbabwe successfully lobbied for media reforms and gained big wins for media freedoms.

Key achievements include the adoption of progressive and explicit constitutional provisions on media freedom, freedom of expression and access to information as now provided for in the country's 2013 Constitution, the partial opening of the broad-

casting sector and the striking off of Section 96 of the Criminal Law Codification and Reform Act, which made defamation a criminal offence.

Looking to the future, freedom of expression NGOs such as MISA face challenging times as the communication eco-system keeps transforming. Advocacy issues within the ambit of digital rights and freedom of expression online include digital access, online content regulation, privacy and surveillance, misinformation and disinformation on social media platforms.

The implications of data and artificial intelligence-driven tools for media freedom and freedom of expression are also essential to consider.

While the introduction of AI-driven tools can create new opportunities for users to exercise their freedom of expression rights, automated filtering and sorting can also result in new digital inequalities and unequal opportunities for access to information.

While personal data has taken an increasing role in all of our lives, the ownership and control of this data are not just questions for people in the IT sector, but also for those interested in freedom of expression and human rights.

**Sarah Chiumbu is an associate professor in the School of Communication, University of Johannesburg, South Africa and former national director with MISA Zimbabwe.**

## A people's media in our time

BY RASHWEAT MUKUNDU

As MISA Zimbabwe marks 25 years of existence, one cannot but marvel at the changes in the media spaces that have unfolded over time.

Gazing into the future, it is again impossible to imagine what the media ecosystem will shape out to be.

One reality is likely to stand out, that media spaces will increasingly belong to the people more so as the online or internet based digital media spaces continue to grow and breach the many bottlenecks, policy and blockages that authorities will try to put in place.

Going back 25 years into the past, it was almost impossible to dream that Zimbabwe would have a constitutional order as we have now, with Sections 61 and Sections 62 specifically protecting, promoting media and free expression rights.

Never mind the intransigence of political leaders in trampling these rights, the foundation is firmly set and what is left is to build on the principles set out in the Constitution.

It was almost impossible to think that the monopoly of the state broadcaster, the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) would be broken. In 2021 Zimbabwe has licensed community radio stations, and commercial TV and radio.

The key change forced on the ruling elite was that the old order was no longer sustainable. The changes have not come on a silver platter but are a result of years of advocacy and engagement on these matters.

If the political elite had a choice, Zimbabwe would not have the online based social media space which has contributed to the democratisation of the media space, much to the disappointment of the political leadership.

An interesting observation as MISA marks 25 years, is the resilience of media reform advocates. If there was an area from which one would easily have quit from, the media sector is one such area, for the monopoly of the state broadcaster, and the ruling elite's determination to maintain a media monopoly appeared to be ironclad.

Generations of Zimbabweans have lived under the media monopoly structure in which the interests of the elites are protected by a well-oiled propaganda machinery.



Rashweat Mukundu

In the past 25 years violence has been used against journalists, prominent of which are the bombings of the *Daily News*, and *VOP*, the dismissal of hundreds of journalists from the ZBC and other state-controlled media. The political capture of some private newspapers, abuse of undemocratic media law to shut down independent media, beatings, threats and arrests of hundreds of journalists and deportation of some.

All this made media advocacy more depressing and, in some cases, hopeless. Change, however, has been built step by step and over decades and generations.

It is for this reason that 25 years on, new media entities spawned by MISA have in turn become critical in advancing the media reform agenda from the opening of the broadcasting sector, media regulation to sustainable community information platforms we now have.

Aided, and through online media, the transformation of the media spaces can only outpace the restrictions we see. Attempts at shutting down civic voices through cyber laws are bound to fail as the net is now a people's platform. The media is no longer alone, but now shares the same spaces with mil-

lions of others in Zimbabwe and billions in the world.

The Zimbabwe government should develop media policy with the understanding that the public can no longer be silenced, but can only be conversed with.

Leaders have to learn to listen and engage and not dominate, learn to share and not restrict and deny. The future of media policy must focus on media as platforms of dialogue on national developmental and governance issues and not for control and managing information.

It is only when quality information is part of our daily conversations that we can collectively fight misinformation and disinformation. Dis and mis - information is partly aided by a lack of access to quality information and absence of public conversations.

Throttling the net, monopolising media spaces such as Zimpapers and ZBC can only fuel the tensions and mistrust in an already polarised society. Apart from a few policy issues, cyber security included, Zimbabwe's future media is anchored on platforms of content generation and information sharing.

Authorities must accept this reality or always be on the back foot.

Journalists have to accept that the world we are in has significantly changed, and that journalism is now conversational and not downloading information to passive audiences.

We are in a world where explainer, sustainable and public interest journalism must take root, more so as Zimbabwe and the entire globe, face existential threats such as climate and environmental disasters and pandemics.

Media policy must therefore promote access to information, sharing and participation. Journalism must go beyond the ordinary to talk to the challenges society faces.

While Zimbabwe remains in the deep waters in its politics, one sure thing is that the public is in the midst of dialogues and discussions.

While we still need to expand such platforms to rural communities, the tide is favouring the people. Our programming going forward must have communities at the centre.

**Rashweat Mukundu is a Zimbabwean journalist and former national director with MISA Zimbabwe.**



# MISA turns 25: a humble giant in the struggle for media reform in Zimbabwe

BY NHLANHLA NGWENYA

**T**HOSE that know me well can attest to my hatred of Mondays. They are such a depressing anticlimax from the usual restful, yet fun-packed weekends that I find therapeutic to the energy sapping and taxing week days of my life.

So January 11 2010 was that odd, but special Monday that has remained etched in my memory and safely secured in my vault of special moments.

I walked into MISA Zimbabwe offices as the national director having been appointed by the Board at the end of 2009, a decision that almost split the organisation's membership as a group of some individuals sought to fiercely contest the Board's judgment all the way to the MISA Regional office in Namibia.

This in itself represented MISA's unkind induction of myself on the fundamental values of the organisation, which uphold the need to allow for free expression of one's opinion and respect for divergent views – however uncomfortable they may be – as the centrepiece of a democratic society.

Membership to one organisation does and should not translate into seeing things the same way. Even choirs have discordant notes that break the rhythm. But they still remain a group bound by the desire to sing for an occasion.

Thus, while I was excited to be leading an organisation that had vastly influenced my career choice as I enrolled for the Post Graduate Diploma in Media and Communication Studies, and later for my Masters degree on the same with the University of Zimbabwe, as well as form the foundation of my career as a media and communications expert post my studies, I was fully much aware of the challenges ahead.

Unity of purpose and building consensus regardless of divergent views was key in positioning the organisation to respond to media challenges of the day and influence reforms, especially as the country invested its hopes on the coalition government made up of Zanu PF and factions of the MDC.

My appointment was almost a year into the formation of the coalition government and hopes were high that it would be smooth sailing for media freedom advo-

cates as they now had allies in the "new" administration.

This was particularly so as the main currency of the administration was the promise of a reformed Zimbabwe characterised by democratic legislation, justice and improved socio-economic wellbeing of citizens.

**The challenges were there for all to see** However, sooner, political brinkmanship within the coalition government left no doubt that the resolution of the fundamental democratic questions of the time would remain an illusion.

And, as MISA Zimbabwe we could not afford to be consumed by the euphoria brought about by the coalition nor shy away from confronting those who had joined government and who hitherto shared with us the same vision on media freedom and freedom of expression. They had to be kept on their toes and held accountable to their promises.

That required a united organisation that spoke with one voice. As the secretariat we ensured the organisation's structures across the country's main provinces came together to focus on the bigger picture of media reforms and sufficient safeguards for freedom of expression.

With the network density of its membership, the organisation built national consensus around its key asks and ensured message discipline during engagements with legislators, diplomats, regulators, relevant ministries and state institutions, community members and key allies in the media and civil society.

It was that unity, which gave the organisation the courage to rebuff sweeteners from some members of government and donors aimed at ensuring that we soften our advocacy blows and compromise on our values.

We could not waiver on our demands on self-regulation, democratic broadcasting regulation, sufficient safeguards for freedom of expression, the promotion of access to information and citizens' right to privacy.

**These were non-negotiable!**

This principled approach, which beyond the usual corridors of power was on public display during the public consultations by the Information and Media Panel of Inquiry as well as the 2013 constitution mak-



Nhlanhla Ngwenya

ing process, is reflected in the outcome of the two processes among other markers of success.

These include the repeal of AIPPA and licensing of community radios, after a long tedious battle with the powers that be.

True to its position as a strategic, foresighted and robust lead agent on media freedom and freedom of expression in Zimbabwe, MISA Zimbabwe proactively appreciated the disruptive nature of digital communication technologies anchored on the rising penetration of the internet in the country.

Rather than watch in awe the unravelling technologies, the organisation took leadership in influencing democratic governance of the digital space as well as promoting access to and availability of the internet, especially among those living on the margins of the information highway.

This was predicated on the realisation of communication opportunities provided by the internet, especially in a country with media restrictions such as Zimbabwe, and the need to thus ensure democratic regulation of the space.

Besides spearheading the convening of multi-stakeholder internet governance forums, providing alternative internet regulatory framework, the organisation facilitated the establishment of community networks – the first of its kind – to promote access in selected rural communities.

This pioneering work soon caught the eye of ICT ministry officials, who then

came up with their own centres.

The journey has been long, hard and risky but worth the sacrifice. Someone has to do it, and selflessly put their neck on the block for the benefit of citizens.

It is trite to note the indispensability of a free media in building democracy. Equally, accountable governance, just and inclusive societies can only become a reality if citizens have access to diverse sources of information as a public good and are able to use the information to question authorities, engage and participate in the governance of their communities as well as mobilise and act for the betterment of their lives.

That is why such zones of advocacy as that occupied by MISA Zimbabwe, is a place I associate myself with no apologies.

It was thus with a heavy heart that I left MISA Zimbabwe on Thursday, August 31 2017, for it had not just become my work place, but a part of my life. My workmates became my second family; the membership became an expansive group of friends spread across the country, who, to this day, I call upon for help.

I also got linked to valuable contacts in the public service, media think-tank organisations and media experts, not only in Zimbabwe, but the region, who to date, play an immense role in my career.

But I had to leave, entrenching a culture of leadership renewal that is characteristic of MISA Zimbabwe. I was the sixth National Director (in 14 years of its existence), and was not going to be the one to break the trend.

As with my predecessors, I had to keep alive the fact that leadership is not about holding on to a seat of authority but ensuring that the organisation outlives your time when you pass on the baton and regenerates new and fresh ideas.

And indeed, MISA Zimbabwe is now more vibrant and has registered staggering successes within a short space of time under new leadership.

Politicians, civil society leaders, can certainly take a leaf from this humble giant called MISA Zimbabwe.

Happy 25th!

**Nhlanhla Ngwenya is former national director with MISA Zimbabwe and a media and freedom of expression advocate.**

## Groomed for leadership

BY VIVIENNE MARARA

### Introduction

**T**HE year 2007 saw me joining the Media Institute of Southern Africa Zimbabwe Chapter (MISA Zimbabwe) as a research and information intern.

Among other things, my duties entailed media monitoring so as to assist in the drafting of media alerts and communiqués on media violations, event management and co-ordination, website management, reports compilation and attending media related court cases.

It goes without saying that my one-year internship saw me developing a keen interest and in-depth appreciation of freedom of expression, access to information and media freedom issues.

### Life at MISA Zimbabwe

When I look back, I fondly remember many notable events that occurred during my internship period. However, if I am asked to pick the most memorable ones, the first one would be the time when I was seconded to work as an assistant at a Media Centre which MISA Zimbabwe established in 2008.

The Media Centre was established to provide a safe space for journalists as they covered the 2008 election story. The 2008 election was one of the most controversial and highly contested elections which culminated in the formation of the inclusive Government in 2009.

As such, working under the Media Centre manager, I got to see first-hand how journalists played



Vivienne Marara

a leading role in telling the Zimbabwe election story - not only to Zimbabweans, but the world over.

My second memorable event was when my then supervisor sent me on a solo assignment to conduct press club discussions in Mutare and Masvingo. I remember travelling with the late MISA Driver, Sekuru Zaru (May His Dear Soul Rest in Peace), to these two events in awe that my supervisor had confidence in my abilities to deliver on these two assignments.

I chose to specifically mention the Media Centre experience and the field trip because these two assignments instilled in me a sense of discipline and

continuously wanting to do my best and not disappoint those who had confidence in my abilities - even as an intern.

Looking back, at that time, I did not realise that this was part of MISA Zimbabwe's grooming processes for tomorrow's leaders.

I, however, have to say that not all was rosy during the internship period. Whereas we were privileged to get transport and meal allowances, this was, however, quickly eroded by inflation because at the time that I undertook my internship (2007-2008), Zimbabwe was witnessing one of its worst hyper-inflation periods.

As a team of about three interns, we would continuously find ourselves having to write requests for allowance reviews to the MISA Zimbabwe finance officer to ensure we had enough transport resources to report for duty.

### Work life

The experience gained during my time at MISA Zimbabwe adequately capacitated me with lobby and advocacy skills which later on encompassed the bulk of my work, when a few months after completing my first degree in Journalism and Media Studies, I was to join the Zimbabwe Association of Community Radio Stations (ZACRAS).

Working at ZACRAS, initially as the advocacy and information officer, and later as national co-ordinator, did not pose many challenges. I already possessed the relevant skills for the job as a result of my internship period.

The numerous Press Club discussions that we organised and attended at the Quill Club in Harare

and the various interactions with journalists, came in handy as I was already acquainted with some of the people that I was to then work with at ZACRAS.

It has been more than a decade since I left MISA Zimbabwe. However, the values and principles instilled in me during my time at MISA will forever remain with me. As a wife and mother of two (a girl and a boy), I sometimes reminisce about how far I have come since the days at MISA.

I am, however, grateful that my MISA memories are always kept fresh as I continue to interact and work with former MISA colleagues.

As I conclude this article, I can only but smile as I reminisce about my time at MISA Zimbabwe. MISA Zimbabwe has groomed several interns who now occupy different influential positions in Zimbabwe and abroad.

We may now be scattered across the country and the world, however, we never forget the MISA Zimbabwe influence and how it shaped us to be the persons we are today.

We shall forever remain "MISA babies".

Happy 25th Anniversary MISA Zimbabwe.

Like fine wine, may you continue to mature with age!

**Vivienne Marara is a media development practitioner. She is the former national coordinator of the Zimbabwe Association of Community Radio Stations (ZACRAS). She can be reached on vivienmarara@gmail.com**



# Cheers to more years of advocacy

BY DAVID MAKACHA

It seems like yesterday, but when I did the calculations, I realised it's exactly 11 years ago when I was recruited as an intern.

Eleven years ago, you were just 14 years old. Some would have called you a teenager in human metaphorical terms, but with the nature of the burden you carried even at that age, you would have been mistakenly labelled as an adult.

This year you turned 25, having been conceived as a Trust on 27 August 1995, growing into a fully-fledged secretariat by August 1997. Today you are celebrating your 25th anniversary following the establishment of the secretariat in 1996.

Congratulations MISA Zimbabwe. Indeed time flies.

This has been a journey with trials and tribulations.

Arrests, detentions, harassments (of journalists and media workers), the list goes on, as part and parcel of that expedition. Indeed, when history is written about the heroes who fought to have media pluralism, diversity, and independence, freedom of expression in Zimbabwe, your name shall be in the forefront.

As you celebrate your 25th anniversary, take encouragement in the gains achieved so far. It is common knowledge that the journey has been through a thorny path. From the days of POSA (Public Order and Security Act)



David Makacha during MISA Zimbabwe internship in 2010

to AIPPA (Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act), the whole tide was against you.

Yet you fought tooth and nail to have media pluralism and diversity. You stood by your values - to promote free speech, equality, diversity, participation, accountability, responsibility and fairness. As mentioned earlier, media diversity, pluralism and independence are not a static destination, but a continuous process that constantly needs checks and balances.

Today we take pride in that the nation is poised to have at least more than one (television) broadcaster, following

the granting of television licenses to private players. We hope they will be on air soon. Most importantly, licenses have been issued to community radios, to complete the three-tier system of broadcasting that you and the general public have been clamouring for.

We look forward to listening to Ntepe, Nyangani, Vemuganga, Matobo, to mention a few (of the community radio stations) broadcast for their local communities. Today, we at least celebrate that we have a Constitution that guarantees freedom of expression. All these notable achievements, in my view, would not have been possi-

ble without MISA's advocacy interventions.

We are not there yet. A lot still needs to be done. Media polarisation remains a big challenge that you need to work on. Perhaps we have a bit of pluralism and without diversity. The fight is a continuous process. Media diversity, pluralism and independence is not a destination, but a continuous process requiring constant maintenance, checks and balances.

As you celebrate your anniversary, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the internship opportunity. It was at MISA that my first newspaper article was published in the Standard's Sunday View Column.

What a glorious Sunday it was. It was at MISA that I gained the confidence to write articles worthy of publishing in newspapers. It is at MISA Zimbabwe that I learnt the importance of expressing an opinion.

One of the officers used to tell me that whether people agree or not, whether your opinion is judged right or wrong, the most important thing is to have your opinion heard.

Today, I am a father. I still cherish my internship moments at MISA. The field events and community meetings were some of my best moments. That experience inspired me to pursue development studies which I am currently studying.

Thank you MISA-Zimbabwe!

Keep on offering interns opportunities to gain practical experience and

the chance to showcase their talents as you did to me. With more television stations and community radios coming, it also means more professional media practitioners are required.

The onus is on you to train responsible journalists to supplement training from colleges and universities. We are looking forward to seeing vibrant community newspapers, community radios and TV stations in Zimbabwe. Our dream for Zimbabwe with free media, diverse, plural and independent media lives on. No time to sleep on duty.

Cheers to more years of advocacy, information dissemination and digital transformation campaigns. Once again, congratulations on your 25th anniversary.

David Makacha is a former intern with MISA Zimbabwe and is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Development Studies in Belgium.



## From an average student to upper class and distinctions

BY LYNETTE DUBE

The year was 2012, when I had to undergo compulsory internship as part of my undergraduate degree studies.

I remember how I settled for a media degree simply because my parents had insisted that it was time I went back to school after two years at work, which was initially meant to have been just a gap year.

My thought process around studying Media and Society Studies at Midlands State University was that I would be confined in a newsroom, reading the 8pm news each evening on the state broadcaster.

I stepped into the MISA Zimbabwe offices in Harare in March 2012, to begin a new chapter in my life. Unmotivated by the field of study, but excited about working for an organisation that was clearly one of the 'big brothers' in the media fraternity.

I remember how some of my classmates had been green with envy at the opportunity that lay before me. It was after a message from the best student in my former class, that I then made a conscious decision that I had to make the most of my one-year stint with the organisation.

My one-year stint at MISA Zimbabwe can best be explained by a glance at my academic transcript. From a mere average student whose grades in the first and second year were a mere means to progress to the next stage, I evolved into an A class student with upper first class and distinction grades from the time I began my internship.

Not only did my grades im-



Lynette Dube

prove from that year, but I also met the most amazing colleagues who later became family. My supervisor Koliwe Majama was tough, but helped me discover that I could enjoy my studies and internship whilst making a positive change in communities.

My perspective of the media landscape literally changed because of her. She would not tolerate any slacking. I remember how I initially thought she was just a difficult person to work with, but when I went out and started networking more, I got perspective on why she would constantly expect the best.

I understood that the environment sometimes demands that we put in extra work, if we are to have any real positive impact. When days were hardest, Annie Musodza - best known by all the interns as 'Madam', was literally a mother. She was a pillar of strength.

To this day, I always wonder how she could be that strong for herself and the hundreds of other interns that passed through her

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# Fearless defence of free speech and media freedom despite adversities

BY HENRY MASUKU

**L**OOKING back, it was a time of trials and tribulations. Zimbabwe was on the edge. The media was under siege.

The government was pursuing journalists. Seasoned scribes who stood up to the current government were scattered all over the world. There we were, unrelenting and vigilant, with the remaining journalists, under siege, prepared to protect and tell the Zimbabwean story.

In January 2004, I walked into the MISA Zimbabwe offices along McChlery drive in Harare. I was not really sure of what I was going to be doing and who I would be working with. This was to become the greatest time for my journalism training in Zimbabwe.

Leading the pack was Dr Sarah Chimbu. What a visionary and iconic iron lady who chose to stand against the regime at a time when doing so was volatile and unheard of.

Leading the information desk was Rashweat Mukundu, a vociferous fellow who spoke his mind and led the dissemination of the Zimbabwean story without fear. In the advocacy department stood a gigantic, fearless maverick, Takura Zhandzha, who mentored me to become the journalist that I am today.

Not forgetting Annie Musemburi - Musodza, who I regard as the face of MISA Zimbabwe. During this volatile era, she carried out her administration work with boldness and clarity.

Well, the first days were not so remarkable. I was the first Intern at Misa and I cherish that forever. The team didn't quite know exactly what to do with me. I was almost everywhere. At one time in the advocacy department, another in the information office, and another, at the front desk.

Occasionally I was asked to practise my culinary skills in the kitchen. I excelled in all departments. The (empty) plates testified to this when I took them for washing.

Journalists were under siege. Week in week out, we were at the courts in support of journalists arrested on frivolous charges. Even today, the regime still hounds journalists who do not follow their narrative.

That is why Zimbabwe is where it is today, with no economic development and a largely subverted Constitution. The Zimbabwean story is still muffled, fear persists among journalists and as long as this subsists, reforms consistent with democratic values remain a mirage.

During that time, Misa Zimbabwe managed to defend journalists through legal

representations, moral support and financial assistance to ensure that they remained focused in their mandate. We conducted workshops to empower them with skills that were critical for such a time.

It was a difficult time and journalists were under immense pressure to tell the Zimbabwean story against all odds.

Personally, I appreciate my time at the organisation. After my internship, which was very much appreciated by the whole team as evidenced by the farewell dinner and kind encouraging words from the team, I set forth to make a difference in my own way.

Although I remained so much in touch with the team and the overlapping activities in my subsequent endeavors, what prompted my advocacy skills was the fire ignited at MISA Zimbabwe.

Going on to lead the Zimbabwe Association of Community Radio Stations (ZACRAS), as the national director, revealed to me that MISA Zimbabwe had raised a giant who could defend people's voices fearlessly with intellectual acuity.

It's over a decade that I have left MISA Zimbabwe, and when I look back, I cherish the work that was done by the team which subsequently took over the great mission. The team has not relented in standing for what is right in terms of media freedom and access to information.

That MISA Zimbabwe still remains in this fight proves that the mandate was and is still legitimate, people-centered and on the course to accomplish what it represents.

I went on to become an international freelance journalist. My eyes were opened beyond the hills. I wanted to see yonder. I left for North America where I am now.

Looking back, it was indeed a time of turmoil. The team at MISA Zimbabwe are at the centre of the defence of the fourth estate.

A lot needs to be done in Zimbabwe in terms of freedom of expression and access to information.

But this comes at a price. But the battle continues, albeit in new dimensions brought by social media.

Journalism remains a noble profession, and those who remain to tell the true Zimbabwean story deserve a pat on the back.

Well done Comrades. Happy 25 years of existence. Keep the fire burning.

*Aluta Continua!*

**Henry Masuku is a former intern with MISA Zimbabwe and freelance journalist based in North America.**

# MISA Zimbabwe media giant that has stood the test of time

BY HILTON ZVIDZAI

**A** very happy 25th anniversary to the Media Institute of Southern Africa Zimbabwe Chapter (MISA Zimbabwe).

We celebrate Zimbabwe and southern Africa's media advocacy giant that has stood the test of time and politically inspired propaganda. Your immense contribution to the fight for press freedom, freedom of expression and a professional media is acknowledged.

I joined MISA Zimbabwe as an intern between August 2005 and August 2006 during my third year of studies for a journalism degree with the National University of Science and Technology (NUST).

Joining the organisation was a scary move that was forced on me by the then chairperson of our department at university. My arguments and opinions around the media law course at varsity led to the forced internships.

"If you don't undertake your internship at MISA it's as good as dropping out of the degree programme," the chairperson warned.

I remember the propaganda that had been spewed by senior government officials and ministers denigrating the organisation and its work. One minister said: "Don't give me the MISA Zimbabwe Chapter, I want to deal with the whole book."

This made me uncomfortable. Joining MISA Zimbabwe was as good as taking a raging bull by the horns.

A few months down the line it was a whole different story.

Nyasha "Mukanya" Nyakunu, made me read extensively on the mandate and work of the organisation. Readings included books on media law, state of the media reports, among many other publications.

I became an advocate of media freedom and wanted to play my part. Thorough understanding (of the mandate), turned this previously terrified person into an advocate of media freedom.

The passion and drive for press freedom positioned me amongst the team that was driving the agenda of media self-regulation.

We traversed the length and breadth of Zimbabwe together with Mukanya, Mathew Takaona (then Zimbabwe Union of Journalists president), and the late Sekuru Paul Zaru (MISA Zimbabwe driver, now deceased), raising awareness and charming the media fraternity and civil society to support the process that culminated in the establishment of the Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe through the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe.

We did rounds that took us on long dis-

tances such as the Harare-Bulawayo-Masvingo-Mutare -Harare trips. We toured the country, made friends and recorded pleasant experiences. I was respected despite my age and position and was afforded opportunities to address some meetings as part of my training.

During my internship - Mukanya always made sure my writing was flowery. He always reminded me: "Hillaz mfanami (my young men) don't just tell the story, people should also be able to visualise the story through your language."

Wilbert "Big Guy" Mandinde, taught me the art of analysis; Annie "Madam Admin" Musodza, taught me how to belong; Joseph "Mujoza" Makiyi, taught me to realise that everyone is important.

Takura "Zheng" Zhandzha, taught me to be a free spirit while being effective and Rashweat "Chief" Mukundu, taught me the importance of impact through strong networks. The whole team taught me love, respect and to be a member of a family.

On the social scene, Zheng's words at my bachelors' party still remain relevant. Yes, he came to the party years after I had left MISA Zimbabwe and spoke words that still keep my marriage on fire. I will leave this one here.

Way before getting married, Annie and Wilbert knew my girlfriend and encouraged us until we walked down the aisle. Annie and Koliwe Majama were there at our wedding, cheering and dancing years after I had left MISA Zimbabwe. We have become family beyond the professional spaces.

Today, I've become a seasoned communication specialist who has made impact across Africa with international organisations - thanks to the immense efforts and guidance from these wonderful colleagues who groomed me while I was at MISA Zimbabwe.

The grooming was just spot on.

Thanks to MISA Zimbabwe, I was only unemployed for just a week after university. Abigail Gamanya, whom I had interacted with during my internship, snapped me and I joined the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe. That's another beautiful story to be told on another day.

I am happily married with three awesome kids. Every now and then, I do return to my home, MISA Zimbabwe, to say hello to family, and sometimes to show off the success that I've become.

The team always allows me to feel at home.

HAPPY 25th.

**Hilton Zvidzai is a communication specialist and a former intern with MISA Zimbabwe.**

# From an average student to upper class and distinctions

From page M7

hands each year. God bless her.

After my under-graduate degree, I worked for a development organisation in Bindura that works with young women before I left to pursue my post-graduate studies with the National University of Science and Technology. Currently, I am working as an Advocacy and Peacebuilding Officer, for a development organisation that mobilises the Christian community to participate in national processes and also advocates for the rights of communities.

The organisation capacitates communities to hold duty bearers to account so that citizens may enjoy their God given rights, as well as promoting peace, unity, and justice.

With the advent of the global Cov-

id-19 pandemic, the right to access information has become of paramount importance. The enjoyment of this right in the wake of the pandemic and declining economic capital of the ordinary citizen is key in rebuilding economies.

MISA Zimbabwe must continue to engage the government to ensure that policies allow for citizens to fully access information and ultimately be able to make decisions that include, but are not limited to their wellbeing.

MISA Zimbabwe must continue to push the government of Zimbabwe to consider issuing of more broadcasting licenses in a manner that is transparent and fair.

By the end of September 2021, Zimbabwe now had 14 licenced community radio stations and six television stations covering nearly all the prov-

inces in Zimbabwe.

There has been an increase of mobile and internet accessibility in Zimbabwe. According to POTRAZ, 8,726,904 people had access to the internet and there were 12,783,785 registered mobile lines in Zimbabwe in the third quarter of 2020.

Guided by the 2016 Zimbabwe National Policy for Information and Communications Technology, the government is targeting to move the education, health, commercial and business sector to digital platforms.

While the opening of the airwaves is a positive development, it is still a major concern whether the content will reflect the voices of ordinary citizens, as there has been a historical trend of intolerance from authorities.

The high costs of data and devices also continues to affect citizens from

participating using these new media opportunities, hence institutions such as MISA Zimbabwe still have a pivotal role to play before we can truly say the media landscape is free, fair, and accessible to the public.

MISA Zimbabwe must therefore continue to engage relevant authorities to provide citizens with the choice to access readily available information from multiple sources.

Happy anniversary MISA Zimbabwe.

**Lynette Dube is a former intern with MISA Zimbabwe and is currently employed as an advocacy and peacebuilding officer with a development organisation that mobilises the Christian community to participate in national processes.**



# Stirring waves while on internship with MISA Zimbabwe

BY TAMUKA CHARAKUPA

**T**HE year was 2015. On my first day, I was very fresh from college; confused and excited as I entered the MISA Zimbabwe gate. I had attended an interview about two weeks back and had been offered placement for internship.

As any new intern would, I was formally dressed.

Right at the entrance, I was welcomed by Annie 'Madam' Musodza who showed me around the offices and introduced me to colleagues I would work with.

One particular colleague, Koliwe 'Kodza' Majama, was to supervise me together with two fellow interns, Yolanda Moyo, and

Bubblejoy Chimbwanda. She quickly noticed I was dressed formally, with a tie, of course, much to her delight.

I was obviously overdressed, a conclusion I arrived at after observing how everyone else was dressed. Kodza told me that I was free to wear anything that was comfortable and that wearing a tie was not necessary. I was relieved.

Days passed into weeks, weeks into months and boom it was a year already. MISA became my family, my home. Each day, I would face a new experience, and Koliwe was always on our throats for perfection.

When she walks into the Resource Centre, expect a full audit of the tasks that

she would have assigned. Some of the duties she was particularly thorough about were on updating the membership database, filing of newsletters and media monitoring.

If one was found wanting and with no positive feedback to report on, a chastisement would be appropriately served to whip the comrade into shape.

Working hand and glove with Koliwe was a tough experience in the early days. She was quite a taskmaster and workaholic. I feared her, but with time I got accustomed to her methods and also got to understand her personality, which brought me closer to her.

She became a friend and big sister. I wanted to be like

her. She would guide me on how workshop reports are written, how to write articles and pushed me to have an interest in digital media, which I am now a full time practitioner in.

On the other hand, Nyasha 'Jena' Nyakunu, would walk in with several newspapers in his hands. 'Mfanami (Youngman) Tamu Tamu, how come you missed this alert?' Soft-spoken and composed, he would hand me the newspaper to write a media alert and send it to him.

After completion, he would call me to his office, point out several corrections and tell me to do it again. And again, he would summon me back into his office; point out another mistake on the retake. This was an everyday experience, but one that shaped my writing skills even to this day.

Jena challenged me to write. He pushed me to publish in the local newspapers, leveraging on the peer professional relationship he shared with prominent media houses. I then started by publishing letters to the editor before slowly getting space for opinion pieces.

That became the solid foundation upon which I built my career on.

Chris and Chido Musodza were also some regular faces. These two were digital security technocrats. It was through working with them that I got to further develop interests in cyber-related issues. They taught us

how the internet basically works, how to protect our everyday digital platforms such as social media pages among other issues.

Today, I boast among friends and colleagues as an expert in digital security through their assistance.

Tabani, 'Boss T' Moyo, Farai 'Fatso' Nhende, and Jackie Chikakano, were the softest go-to bosses. I hardly had hard times with them; their assignments were easy and could be completed with less hustles. Boss T usually gave assignments that could be unearthed in the resource room library which I could submit even before needed, so were Jackie's and Fatso's.

At the back office, there, I would find the 'most loved' colleagues, Cde Simango and Sekuru Ophias, the finance guys. There, I would go with documents which needed authorisation, reconciliation statements and cash requisitions. It was a quiet and serious office, you would hear the sound of a pin dropping on the floor.

Cde Simango was a man of few words, and usually busy on his computer. Sekuru Ophias, jokingly, had time for a little chat before signing my papers. He would ask about my family, my girlfriend and my welfare at the institution. I felt at home.

Then there was Sekuru Jose. He was usually the first person I would meet at the gate before work. He was always laughing and would make sure that as in-

terns, we would be involved in discussions, especially during meal times.

He would sometimes walk down the memory lane with us, being equipped with institutional memories, on how things were done.

Indeed, every colleague was there in his or her own way. It was a whole ecosystem with different unique parts working together to form a bubble of life.

MISA Zimbabwe became my entry door into the media space. The professional network I made through the institution saw me becoming one of the youngest freelance journalists to publish articles in local papers while still at college after the completion of my internship.

After college, MISA was still there looking out for me. I would be invited to workshops. One avenue led to another, and to date, I am the youngest reporter at the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation in charge of three districts, Chipinge, Chimanimani and Buzura.

I am proud to trace my roots to this welcoming institution which I am forever grateful to be associated with.

Happy anniversary MISA Zimbabwe.

**Tamuka Charakupa is a reporter with the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation and a former intern with MISA Zimbabwe.**

## The roots of my journey in activism

BY CYNTHIA MANJORO

**M**Y activism journey began in 2006 during my internship at MISA Zimbabwe.

I vividly remember that during a trip to Harare to visit the national television station, ZBC, we passed the MISA offices. My lecturer pointed to the offices and I was the first in my class to state that I would like to join MISA Zimbabwe as an intern.

So, you can imagine my delight when my CV was selected from among others in the class for me to join the organisation.

Armed with the naivety of a 21 year-old second year journalism and media studies student, I was assigned to the information department where I was to be mentored by a seasoned journalist with vast writing experience, and an intern who was about to leave.

I'm not going to lie; it was a bit intimidating at first.

MISA Zimbabwe is a prestigious organisation whose work on defending and promoting media freedoms, freedom of expression and access to information in Zimbabwe was well known by all journalism students at the National University of Science and Technology (NUST), and as I would learn later, in the civil society sector as well.

In the face of this prestigious organisation, it felt easy to shrivel and hide. But when life gives you such opportunities, you just can't let yourself hide. You have to give it your all. And I did.

The working environment was very cordial and the team was like one big family. And, as is the case with any family, we had nicknames for each other. Hilton Zvidzayi, the intern who was about to go back to university was "elder", I was "younger", the office orderly was "Cde Gono" and the administrator was "Madam Admin". And to this day, whenever we meet, we still refer to each other by these nicknames.

I was assigned both major and minor roles within the organisation and this gave me a chance to not only put my knowledge into practice but to also gain deeper insights into the journalism industry in Zimbabwe.

I conducted research with the then Director, Rashweat Mukundu, wrote articles on media violations and did logistical work in preparation for any events that the organisation would carry out. Despite being an intern, I was tasked with spearheading the World Press Freedom Day celebrations in Chinhoyi.

I have fond memories of having an article I co-published in the first edition of the journal, Thinking Beyond. I also took to fixing printers or computers in the office and updating the organisation's website back in the day when this required more than just copying and pasting.

While I had no prior experience or knowledge of these tasks, the organisation allowed me to learn to adapt to whatever professional situation I found myself in.

What was supposed to be a yearlong in-

ternship turned into a year-and-a-half. My internship experience allowed me to network with journalists from different media houses and towns. This proved to be valuable as I had a strong network of journalists whom I could call on for publication of articles and stories I did in my future roles as Information Officer or Communications Manager for different organisations.

There were days, however, when I felt that my supervisor, Nyasha Nyakunu, was throwing me in the deep end, but I soon realised this was meant to build my capacity and that he had faith in my ability to succeed.

During my last six months with the organisation, I was joined by two other interns whom I worked closely with as they started their journey with the organisation. At that time, I was tasked with heading the Gender and ICT department of the organization, which was no easy feat.

Upon completion of my first degree, I went on to complete a Master of Science in Development Studies with NUST and a Master of Philosophy in Monitoring and Evaluation with Stellenbosch University.

I have held a number of communication posts but I have also been able to move into programming with no prior experience or professional knowledge. My ability to write clearly and concisely, which I sharpened during the year I spent under the mentorship of Nyasha, has opened up a number of opportunities for me professionally.

I am currently the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Manager for an international organisation and a mother of two.

My only regret is that, because of the size of the organisation, I was not able to join them on a fulltime basis upon completion of my first degree. The opportunity came later, however, but I was unable to take it up as I was working for the United Nations International Organisation for Migration.

Despite this, MISA-Zimbabwe has and will always be, in the words of former MISA Zimbabwe chairperson, Kumbirai Mafunda: MISA yepamoyo (MISA, closest to my heart).

**Cynthia Manjoro is currently the monitoring, evaluation and learning manager with an international organisation.**







# One rainy Monday morning in 2012



Tony Manyangadze

BY TONY MANYANGADZE

**O**NE rainy Monday morning in 2012, I arrived at number 84 McChlery Avenue in Eastlea, Harare.

I had a laptop bag in my hand and this raw passion and enthusiasm to make a difference in the media industry. Most importantly, I was looking forward to learning the ropes from the media aficionados at MISA Zimbabwe.

I was taken under the wings by legends. I am forever grateful to Mrs Jacqueline Chikakano, Ms Koliwe Majama, Mr Nyasha Nyakunu, Mr Tabani Moyo, Madam Anne Musodza, and many others.

Looking back, I can attribute most of what I have accomplished so far, both as a journalist and as a media scholar, to my stint at MISA Zimbabwe.

Among other things, I learnt about media rights, media advocacy and community media in Zimbabwe. I also learnt to write news

in vernacular. I got to understand, much broadly, the media landscape in Zimbabwe.

Upon completing my studies in South Africa, I returned to Zimbabwe, where I briefly worked as a freelance journalist.

While covering a demo, I had an unfortunate encounter with the police, and MISA Zimbabwe stood by me. They dispatched a legal representative and ensured my side of the story was heard. Their work in advocating for media rights and freedoms is commendable and crucial to promot-

ing democracy.

Some areas can still be improved, especially now that the media exists in the digital age.

There are a lot of online-based media start-ups and citizen journalists that require training, support and protection from the ominous laws and policies that are being proposed to silence them.

Incidentally, I am about to complete a Masters of Journalism Degree in South Africa. My research focus is on independent media start-ups.

The study was partly in-

fluenced by my experience at MISA Zimbabwe and heavily relied on the reports published by MISA Zimbabwe.

Once published, I will certainly share my findings as I am confident they will benefit a lot of online media start-ups in Zimbabwe and Africa at large.

**Tony Manyangadze is about to complete his Masters of Journalism degree in South Africa and is a former intern with MISA Zimbabwe.**

## An amazing and enriching experience with MISA Zimbabwe

BY LUEN NICOLE PHIRI

**M**ISA Zimbabwe turns 25 this year. I had an amazing experience with the organisation during my internship.

I did my internship at MISA Zimbabwe from 2019 - 2020. I am currently in Masvingo from where I have just completed my degree in Media and Cultural Studies with the Great Zimbabwe University.

My experience at MISA Zimbabwe was amazing and I learnt a lot during my internship.

MISA Zimbabwe advocates for media freedom and freedom of expression as well the right to access to information. Access to information and freedom of expression are rights which should be enjoyed by every citizen.

MISA advocated for media law reforms resulting in (Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act AIPPA being repealed as it was a draconian law which limited media practitioners from conducting their duties freely.

AIPPA was replaced by the Freedom of Information Act and Zimbabwe Media Commission Act. The Parliament of Zimbabwe conducted public hearings in order to get the public's views on these laws because they affect the wellbeing of citizens.

I also had the opportunity to meet Members of Parliament during the public hearings. After these public hearings I had an appreciation of how these media laws affect the work of media practitioners.

I was delighted to witness the media law reform process and this is a success story for MISA Zimbabwe as it advocated for media law reforms to ensure a conducive working environment for journalists.

I had an amazing experience at MISA Zimbabwe as I also participated in the media law reform process.

During my internship, MISA conducted Internet governance conferences with stakeholders from various organisations in Zimbabwe and out of Zimbabwe such as South Africa and Namibia as well as media practitioners from various media houses.

These conferences taught me about digital rights such as the right to freedom of expression and the right to online privacy and the importance of these digital rights.

With the emergence of the internet, people are now using it to abuse other people's rights such as the right to privacy and people are being cyber-bullied. Conferences like the ones



Luen Nicole Phiri

held by MISA Zimbabwe help raise awareness on digital rights.

However, Covid-19 had a negative impact on my internship during my tenure as an intern at MISA Zimbabwe. I was not able to perform my duties effectively because we were not able to work from the office due to the lockdown restrictions.

As time went on, the lockdown restrictions were lifted and we were able to go back to work and perform our duties effectively.

I had challenges during the early days of my internship because I was still in the learning processes, but with time, I was able to write reports, organise events including media monitoring with the assistance of my supervisor and other interns.

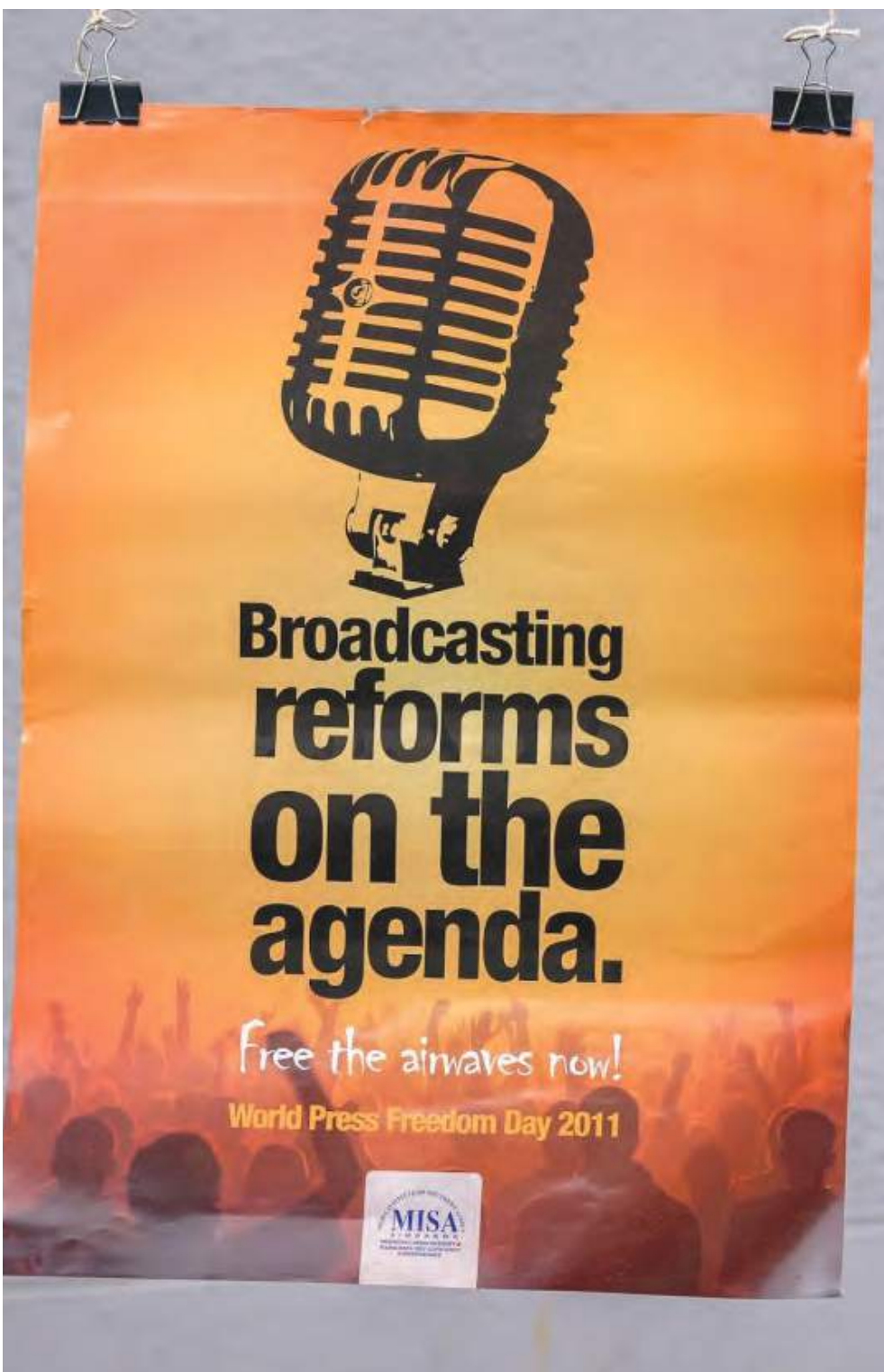
In my opinion, MISA Zimbabwe should have a virtual internship programme as that will provide students with the flexibility to work from wherever is convenient for them, since we are now living in this digital era.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the MISA Zimbabwe family for giving me the opportunity to become part of their family.

They showed me the real definition of team work. I would like to also thank my mentor, Chido Luciasi, for being patient with me, encouraging me and teaching me everything that I know today.

Happy 25 MISA Zimbabwe.

**Luen Nicole Phiri is a former intern with MISA Zimbabwe who has since completed her degree in Media and Cultural Studies with the Great Zimbabwe University.**





# My experience as an intern at MISA Zimbabwe

BY NKOSINI AUBREY KHUPE

**T**O fulfill the requirements of a Bachelor of Science (Honors) Degree in Journalism and Media studies at the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) in Bulawayo, one had to do an internship in their third year.

An internship basically exposes a student to the work environment, an experience that is key in boosting one's employability in the media industry. So having finished my second year, I had an opportunity to intern at the Media Institute of Southern Africa – Zimbabwe in Harare.

I started my internship on August 6, 2012 and it was to stretch for a period of anything between 8 and 12 months. Four students, including myself, went for the interview. I passed the interview together with a colleague from MSU. The interview was my first experience with MISA. It was professionally done.

We were assigned our supervisor, Koliwe Majama who was then the Programmes Officer responsible for Broadcasting, Gender and Information Communication and Technology (ICT).

Our duties included, but were not limited to media monitoring, bulk messaging, newsletter editing, writing media alerts and media communiques. It is during these activities that my first experience with journalism began.

The highlight of my time (at MISA Zimbabwe), was writing bulk messages, media alerts and media communiques all which required one to have a basic understanding of the news writing elements - 5 Ws and the H, that is - the What, Who, When, Why, Where and How?

For every piece I wrote, these had to be there. Bulk messages were particularly difficult because I needed to have the 5W's and H answered in just 160 characters. It was tough and there were times I really felt like giving up.

However, the struggle was worth it.

Under the mentorship of Koliwe Majama, Nyasha Nyakunu (then Senior Programmes Officer), Tabani Moyo (then Advocacy Officer), Jacqueline Chikakano (then Legal Officer), Annie Musodza (Administration) and Nhlanhla Ngwenya (Director), I managed to pull through. It was only after seven months of internship that our supervisor approached us and appreciated the work we were doing saying there was significant improvement.

As such, I gained news writing skills, experience that I did not previously have (except for the training I got at NUST). I also gained a better understanding of the media industry in Zimbabwe, created networks and got a few references for the future.

Above all, my experience at MISA Zimbabwe afforded me a fresh sense of professionalism and a much better view of what it means to be in the professional world. The internship significantly improved my knowledge of the media in general, media freedom, media pluralism, media independence and left me with skills that will be very useful in my career.

Besides professional skills, MISA Zimbabwe internship programme taught me what it means to be family. Few months into my internship I fell ill and was hospitalised at Parirenyatwa Hospital.

The support I got from the organisation and the staff members was overwhelming. Sometimes I say it is the reason why I fought to get better. Not many organisation give interns such warm treatment.

While there is a lot I can share on my experience at the organisation, it would be unfair for me not to share potential areas of improvement for the internship programme. The world is digitalising and so is journalism and the general work environment.

To remain relevant, the internship programme at MISA Zimbabwe should focus a lot more on imparting digital skills to interns. This will ensure that they become relevant in the field of journalism in this 4th industrial revolution.

I would be lying if I say there were some downsides to the programme. Having learnt what it means to work in a professional environment and what it means to be family, I left MISA Zimbabwe a totally new person.

The work and people ethic I developed at the organisation landed me posts with very prestigious organisations such as the Rural Communities Empowerment Trust (RuCET) in the civil society sector as well as academic institutions such as the Catholic University of Zimbabwe (CUZ) and NUST.

Currently I work as a journalism and media studies lecturer in the department of journalism and media studies at NUST. I married a beautiful wife and we were blessed with one baby girl. The level of responsibility I exhibit in my work and for my family is a result of my internship at MISA Zimbabwe.

To more years of refining the media landscape in Zimbabwe and beyond.

Happy anniversary MISA Zimbabwe.

**Nkosini Aubrey Khupe is a journalism and media studies lecturer with the National University of Science and Technology's department of journalism and media studies.**

BY NKOSIKHONA SIBANDA

**I**TOLD myself I wanted to intern at MISA Zimbabwe during the first semester of my second year at University after I had attended one of their workshops in Bulawayo.

This was my first encounter with the organisation. The only other time was when I was looking for references for my assignments at school.

I was sitting at the back of the conference room at a press club meeting with Tabani Moyo, the current acting regional director, addressing media practitioners in Bulawayo, so eloquent, articulate and well informed.

I remember the discussion was about the role of the media during elections and there were a number of well-informed journalists present, engaging and deliberating on the role they should play during the 2018 elections.

When the meeting ended, I was hooked.

I went home and did some research on media lobby groups and the more common and active one from my searches was MISA Zimbabwe. I then scanned and skimmed through their website looking for opportunities that I could take up.

When the time for me to find attachment came, I still had it at the back of my mind that, I wanted to work for MISA. I waited and waited for an advert from the organisation communicating that they were looking for interns.

Through my university lecturers, I then applied for attachment. I was then called in for an interview and shortlisted for the internship programme. I still remember my first day



Nkosikhona Sibanda

at the organisation, it was Wednesday, 17 July 2019 and I was excited to have finally joined the organisation.

The first few weeks at work were difficult, not because of the staff, but because I was stepping into new terrain and did not have a clue on how to deliver on what was required of me.

I was lucky because I got a very patient and understanding supervisor, Chido Luciasi. I was amazed at how young she was, but already a beacon of knowledge. With her assistance I managed to find my footing and deliver what was required of me.

The most interesting thing about MISA Zimbabwe is the unity and family environment that exists at the office. The staff is dedicated to achieving the organisation's objectives and they have a work ethic that I had not experienced before.

I suppose this is the reason why they are one of the most influential media lobby groups in the region.

Their internship programme is one, if not the best in the country. I

know many might want to dispute this, but allow me the chance to argue my case.

Through working with individuals with a plethora of experience and knowledge in Zimbabwe's media sector, interns at MISA Zimbabwe prove to be a cut above the rest when they leave the organisation.

This is not because they are special or anything, but it is because during their one-year working experience with the organisation, they are exposed to a vast amount of experiences and knowledge that give them competitive advantage.

For me personally, for example, I was exposed to advocacy work, social media marketing skills, graphic design, writing and public communication skills.

The programme benefited me in terms of my professional abilities, my knowledge of the media sector, its regulation and international best practices on media and free expression, grew.

The organisation under its past internship programmes has produced vibrant media activists such as Vivian Marara, the current Zimbabwe Association of Community Radio Stations (ZACRAS) national director, and Media Alliance of Zimbabwe (MAZ) chairperson.

The internship programme has a number of vital elements that help in setting a good foundation for aspiring young media and communication professionals.

Happy anniversary MISA Zimbabwe.

**Nkosikhona Sibanda is a professional intern with MISA Zimbabwe**







# Media Reforms Stakeholders Indaba Resolutions

**30 October 2021**  
**Cresta Lodge Msasa**  
**Harare**  
**Zimbabwe**

We, the delegates to the MISA Zimbabwe facilitated **Stakeholders Indaba on Media Law and Policy Reforms** held on 30 October 2021 in Harare, Zimbabwe;

**Having** debated and deliberated on the national importance of media law and policy reforms in Zimbabwe;

**Informed** by deliberations on the state of media law and policy reforms as well as the

updates on the process, policy pronouncements, requisite model laws, constitutional provisions on the same, including regional and international best practices;

**Noting** progress made through the enactment of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA);

**Noting with great concern**, the quest to entrench statutory regulation in Zimbabwe;

**Concerned** with the ravaging effects of COVID-19 on media sustainability and development;

**Cognisant** of the fact that our Constitution specifically recognises the right of all Zimbabweans to freedom of expression, media freedom, access to information and the right to privacy, among other fundamental rights enshrined in the Bill of Rights:

updates on the process, policy pronouncements, requisite model laws, constitutional provisions on the same, including regional and international best practices;

**We hereby** made the following resolutions:

- 1. Regulation of the media**
  - a) Government should allow the industry to self-regulate.
  - b) The industry is committed to the agreed compromise position of co-regulation, wherein the industry is the primary regulatory body while the constitutional Zimbabwe Media Commission serves as an appellatant body.
  - c) Government should take into consideration the Draft Zimbabwe Media Practitioners Bill that was developed by the media industry after wide consultations with journalists in all the country's 10 provinces.
  - d) That any attempts towards entrenchment of statutory regulation in Zimbabwe will not be accepted by the industry.

## 2. Law Reforms

- a) Government should move with speed in its consultations and subsequent gazetting of the Broadcasting Services Act Amendment Bill.
- b) That laws such as the proposed Cyber and Data Protection Bill which passed through parliament and awaits the President's assent, is in compliance with the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights' (ACHPR) Revised Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information. The Declaration recognises the internet as a fundamental human right.
- c) That the government should revisit its Information and Media Panel of Inquiry (IMPI) report and its recommendations towards implementation of far-reaching policy and law reforms.

## 3. Media Sustainability

The media is one of the industries most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, hence the government should consider the following interventions:

- a) Merging the various fragmented pockets of media development funds and establish a media development revolving fund to re-inject capital into the struggling industry.
- b) Consider tax breaks and moratoriums for a given period of time to allow the industry to recover.
- c) Ensure transparency on the current state of the Media Development Fund.

