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CHAIRPERSON’S FOREWORD

This 2016 Annual report is a catalogue of MISA-Zimbabwe’s footprints on the organisation’s strategic interventions towards realisation of its vision of a Zimbabwe in which every person enjoys their rights to freedom of expression, access to information and privacy of communication as well as access to all forms of media that are independent from undue political, economic and commercial interests, coming to fruition. It has to be stated without ambivalence, that the socio-economic and political environment in which these interventions were made was limiting and strenuous, but all the same, the organisation managed to score top-end results, which we proudly showcase through this narrative.

The regulatory environment continued to be defined by restrictive and inhibitive media policies and laws. Three years after the adoption of the 2013 Constitution, which ushered a universally acceptable Bill of Rights, there has not been any meaningful shift in the country’s legislation or policies to make these constitutional gains a reality.

The government- sanctioned Information and Media Panel of Inquiry (IMPI) on 18 March 2015 officially released its report and recommendations on Zimbabwe’s information and media sectors urging the government to review and repeal the country’s restrictive media laws. The report recommends the repeal of laws such as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act (CODE), Broadcasting Services Act (BSA), Censorship and Entertainment Controls Act (CECA), Official Secrets Act (OSA) and Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Act, among others.

Suffice to note that in 2016, more than three years after the coming into being of the 2013 Constitution, the country was still to align a raft of laws that infringe on media freedom, freedom of expression and the right to access to information.

In the face of the obtaining complex socio-economic and political environment, MISA Zimbabwe still managed to roll out a cocktail of high impact activities which kept the outstanding law reforms issue on the agenda.

During the year under review the following summary of results was achieved:

- MISA-Zimbabwe successfully challenged the constitutionality of criminal defamation with the Constitutional Court, in its push for media law and policy reforms.
- Maintained regional and continental pressure on the need for media law and policy reforms by facilitating and coordinating the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR) Chairperson, Commissioner Pansy Tlakula’s meetings with journalists, human rights defenders, media organisations, parliamentarians and regulatory bodies during her four-day advocacy visit to Zimbabwe.
- Led the formation of an Access to Information (ATI) multi-sectorial movement, bringing together Community Based Organisations (CBOs), and the broader civil society on the need to pressurise public bodies to release information critical for informed decision-making.
- In the period under review, MISA-Zimbabwe did not only focus on urban centers in its campaigns, it took its ATI campaigns to rural areas through the launch of the African Media Barometer (AMB) in rural Seke on the fringes of Harare’s dormitory town of Chitungwiza.
- As part of Media Monitoring, having noted the alarming rise in the rate of police harassment of journalists discharging their constitutionally guaranteed duties, MISA-Zimbabwe engaged senior officers of the Zimbabwe Republic Police on the need to to secure the security of journalists. Since the engagement on the 16th of September 2016 to December 31, no journalist were arrested.
- Produced model laws and polices on the governance of the Internet and cyberspace. The bulk of the provisions
of the model laws have been reflected in the three bills being proposed by the Ministry of Information Communications Technology, Postal and Courier Services.

- Through the Media Defence Fund, MISA-Zimbabwe maintained a 100% success rate in its legal assistance to journalists and related support services.

It is therefore MISA-Zimbabwe’s hope that this 2016 Annual Report which highlights the pitfalls in the country’s media, freedom of expression and access to information terrain will assist in influencing decision-makers to move with speed in the implementation of the envisaged reforms critical to Zimbabwe’s transition into a true democracy as enunciated in its 2013 Constitution.

I wish to express my gratitude to both the internal and external stakeholders for the gains attained during the year under review. Special mention to our funding partners for supporting our quest towards the fulfillment and realisation of our mission and vision statements.

**Kelvin Jakachira**

Acting Chairperson
National Governing Council
(The Board)
President Mugabe said then, he would not give in to the West’s demands for reforms as a pre-requisite for the removal of sanctions. Three years after the adoption of the 2013 Constitution which ushered a universally acceptable Bill of Rights, the Zanu PF leader is apparently sticking to his guns considering that there have not been any meaningful shifts in the country’s legislation or policies to make these constitutional gains a reality.

Operational Context

Thus laws such as the discredited Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), used to license and regulate the media; the Official Secrets Act (OSA) to broadly embargo information held by public bodies; and the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA), to hinder free establishment of radio stations, remained firmly entrenched in the country’s statutes. Other laws include the Censorship and Entertainment Controls Act (CECA), used to censor free artistic expression and the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act, used to criminalise media work and citizens’ right to free expression.

The Public Order and Security Act was in 2016 used to arbitrarily ban or disrupt protests and demonstrations despite the citizens’ right to freedom of assembly and association, demonstrate and petition, including the right to freedom of conscience, as provided for by Sections 58, 59 and 60 of the Constitution. Several journalists, civic and political activists were either assaulted or arrested by the police during the 2016 nationwide demonstrations in blatant violation of constitutionally protected media rights and citizens’ enjoyment of freedom of expression and access to information.

In fact, the government appeared determined in its zeal to close the democratic space more-so in the context of free online (social media platforms) expression as it forged ahead with its plans to introduce its cyber crimes legislation over and above the existence of the Interception of Communications Act.

That notwithstanding, MISA-Zimbabwe did not relent in maintaining pressure on the envisaged media legislative and policy reforms. During the year under review, the organisation’s programming, interventions and activities was defined and conducted in terms of MISA-Zimbabwe’s key strategic pillars, notably: People Centred Advocacy, Capacity Building, Research, Media Knowledge Production, Legal Support and Gender Mainstreaming.

INTRODUCTION

In our 2015 State of the Media report we made reference to President Robert Mugabe’s closing remarks at the end of Zanu PF’s December 2015 conference as poignant to government’s commitment or lack thereof to undertake envisaged socio-economic and political reforms.

MISA-Zimbabwe Stakeholder meeting 2016
ACHPR chairperson visits Zimbabwe

In May 2016 MISA-Zimbabwe facilitated and co-ordinated the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR) Chairperson Commissioner Pansy Tlakula’s meetings with journalists, human rights defenders, media organisations, parliamentarians and regulatory bodies during her four-day advocacy visit to Zimbabwe. Commissioner Tlakula was in Zimbabwe in her capacity as the ACHPR’s Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information. During her visit she urged media organisations to push for implementation of the government-sanctioned Information and Media Panel of Inquiry’s recommendations on media reforms.

Commissioner Tlakula said the progressive IMPI recommendations should not be allowed to go to waste. “Implementation (of the IMPI recommendations) will result in enhanced enjoyment of access to information and freedom of expression,” she said.

She said civil society and the media should work together through a co-ordinated and sustained advocacy for the adoption and effective implementation of a separate access to information law to replace the existing Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA).

Commissioner Tlakula who described her visit as successful, held meetings with the chairpersons of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committees on Media; Human Rights as well as the Parliamentary Legal Committee.

Other meetings were held with the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC), Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ), and the Deputy Chief Justice Luke Malaba.

On her meetings with the parliamentary committees, she said: “In this regard, I proposed the use of the Model Law on Access to Information for Africa which was adopted by the African Commission in February 2013, as a guide to Parliament in developing a future law on access to information.

" I also suggested that the Data Protection Bill which is currently being developed by government, should be adopted simultaneously with the adoption of an Access to Information law to ensure coherence and avoid conflict on the two closely related rights of access to information and the right to privacy."

Commissioner Tlakula said she discussed "extensively" the role of POTRAZ in ensuring the enjoyment of the right to access to information through various forms of technology in the wake of the proposed Data Protection, Cyber Security and Electronic Transaction bills.

On the ongoing digitisation process, she said the process should ensure access to information is within the reach of ordinary Zimbabweans. “I also urged the ZHRC to begin engaging with the African Commission by applying for affiliate status and actively participating in its Ordinary Sessions,” said Commissioner Tlakula.
Prior to the enactment of Zimbabwe’s 2013 Constitution, several journalists were being arrested under criminal defamation. Criminal defamation became the authorities’ weapon of choice to intimidate and muzzle the media despite incessant calls by the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR), for members states including Zimbabwe, to decriminalise expression. The continued use of criminal defamation served to instil fear in the citizens and self-censorship among journalists.

Buoyed by the ACHPR’s stance on criminal defamation and the explicit provisions on the right to freedom of expression and media freedom and access to information (Section 61 & 62 of the 2013), MISA-Zimbabwe challenged the constitutionality of criminal defamation with the Constitutional Court, in its push for media law and policy reforms.

The Constitutional Court application sought an order declaring Section 96 of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act unconstitutional. The provision in question provided for the offence of criminal defamation. The matter was filed on 25 February 2015 and the order was eventually granted on 3 February 2016 declaring criminal defamation unconstitutional from its very inception.

No journalist has been arrested following the ruling by the Constitutional Court thus empowering the media and citizens in general to assert their right to free expression without fear and the spectre of arrest and imprisonment in terms of criminal defamation.

Media links on coverage of the case

ConCourt outlaws criminal defamation
- https://www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2016/02/04/con-court-outlaws-criminal-defamation

Criminal defamation outlawed
- https://www.newsday.co.zw/2016/02/04/criminal-defamation-outlawed/

ConCourt outlaws criminal defamation/
- http://www.herald.co.zw/concourt-outlaws-criminal-defamation/

Launch of Access Campaign

In its quest to mainstream access to information into broader socio-economic and livelihood issues, MISA-Zimbabwe convened an Access to Information (ATI) Conference in Harare on 4 March 2016 as a precursor to the launch of nationwide information campaigns in 2017.
A 10-member steering committee that will mobilise and co-ordinate activities to raise awareness on the importance of the right to information in fostering public accountability, was put in place at the end of the conference.

Members of the committee were drawn from various civic society organisations working in health, environment, service delivery, media and the informal sector at the end of the Access to Information (ATI) Conference convened by MISA-Zimbabwe in Harare.

The committee is tasked with establishing an access to information campaign coalition that actively co-ordinates various stakeholders in pursuit of furthering the right of all Zimbabweans to access information in the public interest and as provided for under the Constitution.

More than 100 delegates comprising government representatives, civic society organisations, parliamentarians and the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission attended the conference. Delegates were briefed and discussed, among other issues, government’s measures in promoting the right to information, gaps and challenges in accessing information.

Carina Conradie, a representative of the South African (Right 2 Know Campaign), shared experiences, challenges and lessons learnt from their ongoing campaign. Delegates to the conference agreed and resolved, among other measures, to kick-start the Zimbabwean access to information campaign:

1. That the right to access information must be at the heart and centre of all government departments and state owned enterprises at national, provincial, district, ward and village levels in order for the realisation of national development, democratic governance and social and economic justice.

2. Speak and act collectively on access to information issues of national public interest which relate to democracy, human rights and social and economic justice.

3. Ensure that all the ATI campaigns are gender and youth sensitive and actively promote gender equality and gender mainstreamed access to information.

Visit campaign website: www.infoaccess.co.zw

Report on information practices of public institutions

In 2016 MISA-Zimbabwe released its report on: Information Dissemination Practices of Selected Public Institutions. The report is based on the findings of a survey to monitor whether or not and to what extent public institutions pro-actively disseminate public interest information in line with Section 62 of the Constitution and other instruments such as the Banjul Declaration on the Principles of Freedom of Expression in Africa and the African Platform on Access to Information (APAI).

The survey was conducted in August – November 2015.

Findings were drawn from the experiences of a group of community based organisations in their quest to obtain information from public institutions. Analysis of the practices focused on online presence, information dissemination and interaction on online platforms such as facebook and twitter.

The institutions monitored were:

• Ministry of Health and Child Welfare
• Ministry of Women’s Affairs, Gender and Community Development
• Ministry of Transport and Infrastructural Development
• Municipality of Masvingo
• Zimbabwe Football Association
• Zimbabwe National Water Authority
• Harare City Council
• Parliament of Zimbabwe
• Kariba Municipality
• Zimbabwe United Passenger Company
• Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council
• Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises and Co-operative Development

The study revealed that appreciation of the right to information is still lacking in Zimbabwe as pro-active disclosure of information was on an ad hoc basis. For instance, requests for information to the Ministry of Health in Harare remained unanswered.

However, the fact that a requester who approached the ministry’s offices in Masvingo was assisted with her request, points to a gap in the law (AIPPA), as far as promotion and enforcement of the right to access to information is concerned.

Timeframes within which to respond (30-day period) as well as stipulations for a requester of information to be given reasons for failure to respond in terms of AIPPA were generally ignored. The City of Harare, however, emerged as the organisation that has taken steps to fully utilise online platforms to disseminate information.

It was also the most pro-active institution in disseminating information through the print media and had the most number of press releases and adverts on its events, programmes and activities in the public interest. The Ministry of Transport was one of the least performing institutions, with no social media presence and a non-functional website for the larger part of the monitoring period.

Rural Launch of AMB Zimbabwe Findings

Guided by its people-centred advocacy thrust, MISA-Zimbabwe for the first time launched the findings of the 2015 Africa Media Barometer Zimbabwe findings at Dema rural business centre in Mashonaland East province.

An estimated 100 people attended the launch ceremony organised by MISA-Zimbabwe.

This marked a significant departure from the previous AMB launches which were held in the capital Harare. The launch followed the convening of the 11-member Africa Media Barometer Zimbabwe panel which met in Nyanga in November 2015. Councillor Rubatika officially launched the AMB findings together with MISA’s 2016 Transparency Assessment Report during the event jointly organised by MISA-Zimbabwe and the Chitungwiza Residents Association (CHITREST).

The AMB is a self-analytical measurement of the state of the media in a given country derived from African Protocols such as the Declaration of Principles of Freedom of Expression.

The Transparency Assessment Report is annual survey conducted by MISA Regional Office which aims at gauging the levels of transparency and the readiness of public institutions in disclosing information.

Among its findings, the AMB report noted that the media operating environment in Zimbabwe has not changed due to the continued existence of repressive laws and that citizens and journalists exercise their right to freedom of expression with a “high level of fear”.

It further noted that the media remained polarised along political lines characterised by sharp divisions in the coverage of economic and political issues. This polarisation was also perpetuated by the non-independent nature of the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) and its partisan board. The independent press also contributed to the polarity by adopting journalistic practices that promote opposition politics.
Meanwhile, out of the 10 institutions surveyed under Transparency Assessment Report, the Tobacco Industry Marketing Board was the most open and transparent institution followed by the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission and the Grain Marketing Board.

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education was the most closed and least responsive in terms of information disclosure.

The councillor called upon civil society, media and government to ensure issues pertaining to access to information and media coverage represent the views of marginalised communities. “One gets a sense that the media, on one hand, is increasingly becoming detached from the people. They want to force our communities to think through political lenses detached from the day-to-day developmental issues affecting us.”

“On the other hand, the government selectively releases what it deems to be relevant information from its own point of view which does not tally with realities on the ground,” said Rubatika.

Introduction

In 2016, the country recorded significant growth in mobile subscriptions and internet penetration. This development not only had a bearing on the telecommunications sector, but also, significantly impacted on the broadcasting sector.

Citizens found themselves with an alternative platform from which to access critical information, usually ‘censored’ by the mainstream broadcasting sector.

There was an increase in citizens producing and sharing audio and visual productions broadcast online via over the top (OTT) services, whatsapp and facebook, which were made more accessible to the citizenry owing to ‘special’ subsidised data costs charged by the Mobile Network Operators.

During the course of the year, the country witnessed the mushrooming of social movements which saw citizens mobilised to action, characterised by demonstrations, street protests and what has been recorded as the country’s largest citizen organised nationwide stayaway on 6 June 2016.

These events led to a number developments in relation to the regulation of both the broadcasting and telecommunications sectors. Firstly, an upsurge in the number of members of the public arrested or charged for either exercising their rights to expression through opinions or sharing information relating to the country’s political and economic issues over the internet. Secondly, the issuance of a warning to licensed broadcast players against the coverage of the protests by the regulator, the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe.

BROADCASTING AND ICT PROGRAMME

Introduction

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Other events included the two-hour long disruption of the WhatsApp service during the nationwide stayaway, the finalisation and adoption of the ICT Policy in August 2016 and the public consultations into the country's anticipated cyber laws, that include Data Protection, Electronic Transaction and Electronic Commerce Bill and the Computer Crime and Cyber Crimes Bills.

Meanwhile, the completion of the country's digital migration from analogue to digital television broadcasting remained indefinite.

MISA-Zimbabwe’s interventions in the sector focused on two main objectives:

1. Promotion of the leveraging of ICTs as tools facilitating the exercise of rights to access information and free expression

2. Mobilisation of relevant stakeholders to push for democratic regulatory frameworks for both the broadcasting and ICT sectors.

MISA-Zimbabwe interventions on the performance of ZBC continued to trigger debates in both mainstream and online media.

The Constitutional Court ruling on the 2012 challenge against the payment of listener licenses, involving two applicants, Bernard Wekare and Musangano Lodge, was of significance as it echoed elements of MISA-Zimbabwe’s campaign for the transformation of the broadcaster. The ConCourt recommended that ZBC should safeguard its independence, improve its content and accountability to the public.

On the internet policy front, MISA-Zimbabwe’s interventions ensured that targeted groups were made to be aware of the importance of protecting human rights on the internet. Policy makers, civil society, technical community, ordinary users and bloggers were engaged online and during the cyber laws consultative meetings hosted by the Law Development Commission in Harare and Bulawayo. Furthermore organisations such as the Digital Society of Zimbabwe, Open Parly and the Zimbabwe Institute of Engineers (ZIE), partnered with MISA-Zimbabwe in its interventions in critiquing the proposed internet regulatory framework.

Katswe Sistahood’s campaign against the country’s anti-pornography law as it pushes for the criminalisation of revenge pornography in the Computer Crimes and Cyber Crimes Bill, further indicates the uptake by civil society organisations. The campaign is evidence of lobby against existing legislation that limit citizens’ human rights and freedoms online.

There was an unanticipated increase in the number of arrests and/or charges of the public exercising their right on the Internet and ICTs. MISA-Zimbabwe noted 27 arrests on WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter in seven separate incidences that were reported in the mainstream media. However, the digital security training interventions for bloggers, civil society organisations and mainstream journalists, helped in raising awareness on security issues online. As a result, no media practitioners were arrested thereafter.

Meanwhile, the internet literacy schools in rural communities offered opportunity for the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on ICTs to interface with marginal communities and solicit their opinion on developments within the sector. Following work in two Matabeleland rural constituencies of Lupane and Plumtree, The Committee summoned the ICT Minister to address concerns on the regulation of social media!, which were popular during the meetings at the two schools.

To enhance its advocacy work, MISA-Zimbabwe created rapport with the relevant ICT authorities. Meetings were held with ministry officials, representatives of the Zimbabwe Internet Governance Forum and the regulator, POTRAZ. The interaction with POTRAZ led to the hosting of a collaborative meeting with Internet Service Providers (ISPs) that drew up recommendations for increased access and a pricing policy in Zimbabwe which include traffic management by service providers, cost and digital rights.

### Outlook/Projections for 2017

- Lobby for the transformation of ZBC.
- Increase public awareness on use of ITCs in marginalised communities.
- Build on its work to increase in the awareness of ordinary citizens and Internet stakeholders on the protection and promotion of human rights both online and offline.
- Continue to promote multi-stakeholderism in the country’s internet governance processes with prominent stakeholders that include ISPs and civil society.

1. [https://www.newsday.co.zw/2016/04/12/no-intention-ban-social-media-mandiwanzira/](https://www.newsday.co.zw/2016/04/12/no-intention-ban-social-media-mandiwanzira/)
LEGAL SUPPORT

Media defence cases

During the period under review, Misa-Zimbabwe secured the right to liberty of journalists arrested during the course of their work under its Media Defence Fund except in the case of Crispen Ndlovu who was charged with criminal nuisance. Ndlovu was, however, subsequently released after the police recorded his warned and cautioned statement.

MISA-Zimbabwe also provided provisions such as food, medical assistance and transport money to enable relatives to visit some of the journalists while they were in detention. The following are some of the cases successfully handled by the organisation in 2016.

• **Paidamoyo Muzulu**: Securing release of Newsday journalist Paidamoyo Muzulu on bail [20 June 2016] thereby allowing him to continue exercising his right to media freedom and freedom of expression while the matter is on remand.

• **Garikai Chaunza and 4 others**: The speedy provision of a lawyer secured the release without charges of freelance journalists Garikai Chaunza, Christopher Mahove, James Jemwa, Khumbulani Zamchiya and Edward Gweshe who were arrested at the Rainbow Towers Hotel in Harare on 26 June 2016 while covering protests against Vice President Phelekezela Mphoko’s continued stay at the Rainbow Towers Hotel.

• **Christopher Mahove and Lawrence Chimunhu**: Medical attention after assault by police. Legal assistance for Mahove towards recovery of recorder and assault by police.

• **Tony T. Manyangadze**: Legal assistance to secure release of camera confiscated by the police.

• **James Jemwa**: Media defence assistance while in prison (food).

• **Tendai Mandimika**: Media defence assistance while in prison (food).

• **Crispen Ndlovu**: Provision of legal fees and food while in police custody.

Im humbled to announce that last night I was reunited with my family after four nights as a state guest after being arrested in a police dragnet at Africa Unity Square last Thursday afternoon.

I have to pass my sincere thanks to all cde who shared the information and online solidarity. My wife, daughters and me feel eternally indebted cdes Zhangazha, Koliwe Nyoni, Jacqueline Chikakano and Misa-Zimbabwe for going beyond online solidarity and facilitating my release by providing the bail money.

I think the broad facts of the case are now in the public domain save to say police standards in investigating issues is at its lowest. The police now enjoy carrying out political instructions without questions. If they had cared to do basic investigations on the case they would not have arrested me.
MEDIA SUPPORT

Following the enactment of Zimbabwe’s 2013 Constitution, the country now has explicit provisions that guarantee media freedom and the right to access to information as provided for in terms of Sections 61 and 62. However, despite these seemingly positive gains in the wake of the new constitutional dispensation, journalists have continued to face arrest under the same repressive laws, which are clearly ultra-vires the constitution, further strengthening the need for urgent realignment of laws with the Constitution.

The country’s statutes remained littered with laws which contain provisions that are in conflict with the new constitution such as the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act (CODE), AIPPA, Broadcasting Services Act (BSA), Interception of Communications Act (ICA), the Official Secrets Act (OSA) and the Censorship and Entertainment Controls Act, Public Order and Security Act, among others.

Media roundtable discussions

In 2016 MISA-Zimbabwe thus continued with its roundtable media meetings aimed at mobilising the media to defend its democratic space and professional integrity. The discussions thus focused on ensuring that media practitioners are engaged on matters plaguing their sector and formulate strategies on addressing problems affecting them.

During the year under review MISA-Zimbabwe convened and facilitated eight roundtable discussions in Bulawayo, Masvingo, Chinhoyi, Victoria Falls, Gwanda and Kwekwe as part of efforts at mobilising the media to defend its space and professional integrity.

Three of the meetings in Chinhoyi, Gwanda and Victoria Falls focused on positioning the media to defend its democratic space while the other five were on media professionalism. In the wake of the arrests and assaults of journalists by the police while covering nationwide demonstrations, MISA-Zimbabwe convened two journalism safety and security meetings in Masvingo and Bulawayo on 15 and 17 September 2016. The meetings were aimed at acquainting journalists on the profession’s safety and security measures to minimise risk to their lives while on duty.

ADVOCA CY

During the period under review, the advocacy department conducted a mix of activities aimed at piling pressure on the government to move with speed in aligning media laws with the Constitution. In this regard, the following activities were successfully conducted:

POTRAZ head of ICT, Ticha Faru, speaking at a breakfast meeting with Internet Service Providers.

MISA-Zimbabwe former Vice Chairperson, Lifagane Nare (Standing) speaking at Bulawayo World Press Freedom Day commemorations. Seated is Bulawayo Advocacy Chairperson Annahstacia Ndlovu
• Stakeholders conference on media law and policy reforms

• Organised the commemorations of World Press Freedom Day in nine centres where MISA-Zimbabwe is represented through advocacy committees.

• A total of 20 one-on-one lobby meetings with influential public officials, Members of Parliament and the Executive on the need for media law reforms

The afore-stated interventions positioned MISA-Zimbabwe as a thought leader and leading organisation in the push for media laws and policy reforms in Zimbabwe.

The Media Stakeholders Conference was convened to build consensus on priority areas for the envisaged reforms ahead of the planned all-stakeholders meeting that had been planned for 2016 by the Ministry of Media, Information and Broadcasting Services. To this end, the conference resolutions form the basis of engagement on media reforms with government and within the region by media stakeholders.

Meanwhile, members of the Parliamentary Committee on Media, were the guest speakers in respective provincial capitals during which they appraised the media on progress pertaining to media law reforms during the World Press Freedom Day commemorations.

The intense lobby and advocacy meetings with the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Information, Media and Broadcasting Services and information ministry officials, resulted in positive policy pronouncements on the need to repeal AIPPA and the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA).

Appearing before the parliamentary committee, Secretary for Information George Charamba, described the two laws as outdated and incongruous with the new constitutional dispensation. This has set the foundation on which media law and policy reforms will be anchored on, since the parent ministry sponsors policy and laws reform.

Subsequently and during the course of the year, two members of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Media, James Maridadi and Malachi Nkomo tabled motions on the repeal of AIPPA and BSA respectively.
MEDIA FREEDOM MONITORING

During the year under review, MISA-Zimbabwe conducted daily monitoring of media freedom and freedom of expression (online and offline) to determine the scale and magnitude of Zimbabwe’s adherence to the enjoyment of the aforementioned rights as provided for by the constitution.

Monitoring is conducted to detect such violations and the nature of the violations thus gauging the authorities attitude and appreciation of the importance of the enjoyment of fundamental rights to foster public accountability and socio-economic development.

PETITION AGAINST ARRESTS OF JOURNALISTS BY THE POLICE

Shocked by the escalation in the number of cases involving the unlawful assaults and arrests of journalists by the police, MISA-Zimbabwe led a delegation of journalists, representatives of the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists and Media Alliance of Zimbabwe and met with police chiefs in Harare on 16 September 2016.

This followed the arrest, assault or unlawful detention of 27 journalists by the police while conducting their lawful professional duties of covering protests and demonstrations between May -August 2016.

The MISA-Zimbabwe delegation headed by the organisation’s Trustees Chairperson, Cris Chinaka, handed over a petition expressing media practitioners’ displeasure over their treatment by the police to Commissioner General Chihuri’s delegated representative, Senior Assistant Commissioner Charity Charamba. The petition was signed by more than 150 journalists drawn from both the state and private media as well as freelancers.

During the meeting the police pledged to ensure the safety and security of journalists and implement resolutions of the meeting to address among other issues, mutual suspicions and unprofessionalism on the part of the media. Thereafter, no journalists were arrested nor assaulted by the police as of December 2016 while conducting their lawful professional duties.
MONITORING AND EVALUATION

At the programmes level, Monitoring and Evaluation was employed as the tool for measuring project impact and whether expected outcomes are being implemented effectively. The purpose of monitoring and evaluation is to track implementation and outputs systematically, and measure the effectiveness of programmes. It helps determine exactly whether a programme is on track and when changes may be needed.

Monitoring and evaluation forms the basis for modification of interventions and assessing the quality of activities being conducted.

CHALLENGES

• Policy inconsistencies in the wake of the ruling Zanu PF factional fights forced the organisation to continuously review its advocacy interventions.

• Acute financial and resource constraints hampered implementation of some of the planned activities and interventions.

• Lack of clarity and transparency on issues and processes relating to both the broadcasting and ICT sectors.

• Corruption was highlighted as one of the issues compromising the quality of stories and inherently media professionalism and ethics amid allegations some editors were in the pockets of politicians and certain businesspersons.

• Politicisation of the media landscape compounded by the state’s stranglehold, if not capture of the public media poses a serious challenge to media professionalism and also stands in the way of depolarising the media environment,

• Some journalists said they were not too keen on investigative stories as they suspected colleagues of being the moles of powerful politicians, senior government officials and businesspersons.

• Political economy of the media: Several media companies are operating on shoe-string budgets due to the harsh economic conditions which has resulted in dwindling advertising revenues and poorly resourced newsrooms and poorly remunerated reporters.

OUTLOOK/PROJECTIONS 2017

• Upscale lobby and advocacy activities to influence implementation of media law reforms.

• Consolidate awareness campaigns on the protection and promotion of human rights both online and offline.

• Promote multi-stakeholderism in the country’s internet governance processes with prominent stakeholders that include internet service providers and civil society.

• Media training workshops on election reporting, safety and security, conflict journalism and reporting on renewable energy and climate change.

• Upgrading Information Kiosks in line with ICT developments.

• Invest in the brand equity of the organisation through digital packaging of its products.