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Development Journalism in Zimbabwe: Practice, Problems, and Prospects

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Abstract

This paper presents research findings on development journalism in Zimbabwe. Through a case study approach of the Chronicle newspaper coverage of the Millennium Development Goals, the paper explores current issues in development journalism practice, problems and prospects. The main focus of the research paper was to evaluate the validity and relevance of development journalism as theoretically conceived by Galtung and Vincent (1992) in contemporary journalism practice. It is argued that the hackneyed concept of development journalism remains valid and relevant in Zimbabwe and the rest of world especially if development targets such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are to be achieved by 2015. In spite of its obvious merits in catalyzing development processes, development journalism is fraught with problems to become a worthy journalism pursuit. Development journalism lacks appeal and vigor and is almost impracticable in contemporary journalism practice. Operational environment factors such as tabloidization; cut throat inter media competition; profit motives of shareholders; lack of specialised training in development journalism; Westernisation and juniorisation of the journalism profession; and the development slump undermine the practice of development journalism in Zimbabwe. However, the practice of development journalism in Zimbabwe has a future because both the government and journalists need it to gainfully promote the achievement of national development goals.

Key Words: *Development Journalism, Emancipatory Journalism, Millennium Development Goals, Zimbabwe*

Introduction

Zimbabwe is party to the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which were agreed upon by 189 world leaders in September 2000 through the United Nations Millennium Declaration. By ratifying the United Nations Millennium Declaration member states committed themselves to a better world, which they defined in terms of values of peace and security, eradication of poverty, protection of the vulnerable, protection of the environment, and respect for human rights. The MDGs represent tangible targets, and provide a coherent framework through which governments, non-governmental organizations, and all manner of civil society organizations can work to achieve sustainable and quantifiable development by 2015. The MDGs provide concrete, numerical benchmarks for tackling extreme poverty in

its many dimensions. The eight goals include targets on income poverty, hunger, maternal and child mortality, disease, inadequate shelter, gender inequality, environmental degradation and the global partnership for development. The MDGs are time-bound goals set to be achieved by 2015. If the MDGs are achieved, world poverty will be cut by half, tens of millions of lives will be saved, and billions more people will have the opportunity to benefit from the global economy. With barely two years left to achieve the MDGs, Zimbabwe's progress has been slow (UNDP and MoLSS, 2010). The media are widely regarded as important tools for national development. Advocates of MDGs are confident that the media can contribute and accelerate progress towards attainment of MDGs by engaging in active development journalism.

Media and development

In order to achieve the MDGs, collective effort is required from different development actors. Aboum (2004) identified seven such development actors with different roles and responsibilities to make the MDGs achievable by 2015. They included: (i) Developed countries; (ii) Developing countries; (iii) Multilateral institutions; (iv) World Bank, IMF, and Regional Development Banks; (v) the International donor community; (vi) The poor people; and, (vii) Civil society and faith based organisations. In identifying the seven development actors above, Aboum (2004) excluded the media. Vernon and Baksh (2010:7) pointed out that the universal agenda to achieve the MDGs by 2015 without the active involvement of the media was likely to fail. They wrote;

There is need for the development discourse to be reframed in ways which help create a better understanding of what constitutes development, and how change happens.

Because of the inertia in the aid system, this will require good leadership from within the sector, and from politicians and in the media.

In theorising the development-media relationship, the paper brings to the fore the concept of development journalism.

Development journalism: Origins, evolution and current Status

Development journalism has different definitions in different contexts. The concept originated in the Philippines and was developed into a coherent doctrine in the 1960s across Asia and the Middle East (Ogan 1980: 8). In the subsequent years, development journalism gained universal currency with a strong following in the Second and Third World. The conceptual basis of development journalism relies heavily on development communication theories. In 1968, a not for profit organisation, the Thomson Foundation sponsored a course called The Economic Writers' Training Course. The Course Chair, Alan Chalkley was the first to coin the term "development journalist" (Ogan 1980: 11). Working with the Philippine Press Institute, Chalkley and Erskine Childers began to conduct development oriented seminars to encourage the Philippine journalists to report more development news. Chalkley (1968 in Ogan 1980:7) explained that a journalist's main task was to inform and give his or her readers the facts. His or her secondary task was to interpret, to put the facts in their framework and, where possible, to draw conclusions. Chalkley added that the third task of the development journalist was to positively promote facts of economic life and to interpret those facts, to open eyes of readers to the possible development solutions. In 1968, the Press Foundation of Asia (PFA) was formed with funding from the Ford Foundation to promote development journalism. The PFA set up Depth-News, an acronym for development, economic and population news. The PFA implored journalists to write technical and scientific articles in easy to understand terms for the ordinary people. In its

working guidelines the PFA stated that the “media are encouraged to be development conscious, to disseminate as much information as possible about the potentials of a country and the efforts being extended to fulfill these potentials and to encourage the public to participate in these efforts.”

Aggarwala (1979 cited in Ogan 1980: 8) described the essence of development journalism as to “critically examine, evaluate and report the relevance of a development project to national and local needs, the difference between a planned scheme and its actual implementation and the differences between its impact on the people as claimed by government official and as it is actually is”. Development journalism also entails that the media should critically report on the MDGs, comparing planned schemes and actual implementation and impact. Shaw in Banda (2006: 6) defined development journalism as consisting of ‘news’ that:

Should examine critically, evaluate and interpret the relevance of development plans, projects, policies, problems, and issues. It should indicate the disparities between plans and actual accomplishments, and include comparisons with how development is progressing in other countries and regions. It also should provide contextual and background information about the development process, discuss the impact of plans, projects, policies, problems, and issues on people, and speculate about the future of development. And development news should refer to the needs of people, which may vary from country to country or from region to region, but generally include primary needs, such as food, housing, employment; secondary needs such as transportation, energy sources an electricity; and tertiary needs such as cultural diversity, recognition and dignity.

Vilanilam (1979 cited in Machado 1982:11) proffered a definition of development news as:

News relating to the primary, secondary, and tertiary needs of a developing country. Primary needs are food, clothing, and shelter. Secondary needs are development of agriculture, industry and all economic activity, which lead to the fulfillment of the primary needs, plus development of education, literacy, health environment, medical research, family planning, employment, labour welfare, social reforms, national integration and rural and urban development. Tertiary needs are development of mass media, transport, tourism, telecommunication, arts and cultural activities.

Gunaratne (1996:5) described developmental journalism as an integral part of a new journalism that involved "analytical interpretation, subtle investigation, constructive criticism and sincere association with the grassroots (rather than with the elite)." According to Wimmer and Wolf (2005), development journalism comprises the reporting on ideas, programmes, activities and events, which are related to an improvement of the living standard, mainly in the rural regions. (1988 in Gunaratne 1996:10) conceptualized developmental journalism as news that related to the primary, secondary or tertiary needs of a country's population; news that satisfied the needs of a country's population and contributed to self-reliance; and news that related to development or to social, economic or political problems. Kunczik (1986 cited in Wimmer and Wolf 2005) saw development journalism as an intellectual enterprise in which the journalist should form a kind of free intelligence and should critically examine the aims of national development and the applicable instruments in rational discourse and solve them by using reasonable criteria free of social constraints. Accordingly, development journalism has the following tasks:

- To motivate the audience to actively cooperate in development and,
- To defend the interests of those concerned.

Domatob and Hall (1983 in Wimmer and Wolf 2005) state that by its name, development journalism recognizes the reality of underdevelopment, that development is a valid social goal and that media have a contribution to make towards it; that is, the media are expected to actively pursue this role. The main characteristic of development journalism is the deliberate and active role in pressing for change. It is geared towards mobilizing the people for national development. Mwaffisi (1991 in Wimmer and Wolf, 2005;11) has argued that development journalism "is not reporting about events, but processes, and not reporting about personalities but issues".

In Africa, early theorists of development journalism argued that development journalism should promote PanAfricanism. Such theorizing saw the media as a revolutionary tool of African liberation from colonialism and imperialism. In the same vein, the media worked as extension of government policies of social, economic and cultural development. African theorists also argued that development journalism meant, above all, nation-building, creation of national consciousness, and unity. The duty of development journalism was to awaken citizens to the new cultural imagery of patriotism, nationhood, inculcate a viable degree of 'we feeling', cohesion across tribal, racial, regional, religious, and linguistic loyalties. Development journalism also entailed that the media should contribute to national development goals, inform citizens of relevant governmental policies, introduce national leaders, foster political stability, and promote national integration and education. Lent (1977 in Ansah 1998: 12) rationalised the argument of development journalism when he noted that:

Because Third World nations are newly emergent, they need time to develop their institutions. During this initial period of growth, stability and unity must be sought; criticism must be minimized and the public faith in government institutions and policies must be encouraged. Media must cooperate, according to this guided press concept, by stressing positive, development-inspired news, by ignoring negative societal or oppositionist characteristics and by supporting governmental ideologies and plans.

The late president of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, a former journalist, believed in development journalism. According to Ansah (1998:12) Nkrumah used his paper, *Accra Evening News* to whip up support for his political party during the struggle for Ghana's independence and rejected the idea of an independent press. He believed in activist journalism, that a journalist should have high ideals, be a political activist and party member, and his newspaper a collective organizer, a collective instrument of mobilization and a collective educator, a weapon first and foremost for the overthrow of colonialism and imperialism and to assist total African independence and unity. Nkrumah (1965 cited in Odhiambo, 1991:24) thus claimed "the true African newspaper is a collective educator – a weapon, first and foremost, to overthrow colonialism and imperialism, and to assist total African independence and unity."

Scholars such as Odhiambo (1991:28) has dismissed the nationalist and Pan African feelings that development journalism evokes, arguing that development journalism is obsolete when he noted:

...like the ideology of development which is its *raison d' etre*, development journalism, though a welcome departure from Western mass media paradigms lacks organic relevance to make it a legitimate professional pursuit for sub-Saharan African journalists. This is because 'development' no longer evokes patriotism in the present socio-political environment of the region.

Galtung and Vincent (1992 cited in Banda 2006: 6) have proposed a ten point working model for development journalism. Galtung and Vincent (1992 in Banda (2006: 6) point out

that the task of the development journalist is to “unravel the threads of the development drama that takes place both in the centre and periphery, pick them out of the intricate web of relationships, hold them up in the sunlight, and demonstrate the connections to readers, listeners and viewers”. They argue that “the problem, however, is that when this drama is written out, the underlying text tends to be about the same in all cases: imperialism, exploitation and other leftist themes”. Due to the fact that development journalism has different connotations and meanings in different contexts, the research was premised on the ten point development journalism model advanced by Galtung and Vincent (1992 cited in Banda 2006:7). The ten point journalism model, by Galtung and Vincent (1992) underscores the need for journalists to recognise the reality of underdevelopment; that development is multidimensional and exceeds economic growth; that development should focus on local and international relations focusing on the lives of the poor and the rich; that development journalism is critical and investigative in nature and that development journalism is participatory. Participation in development journalism entails creation of community media and universal access to all media thereby generating a wide range of development visions.

Melkote (1991 in Mefalopulos 2003:48) sums up the ultimate goal of development journalism/communication as to raise the quality of life of populations, including the increase of income and well-being, eradication of social injustice, promotion of land reform and freedom of speech and establishing community centres for leisure and entertainment.

Method

Data were obtained through semi structured interviews with the *Chronicle* journalists on their perceptions of development journalism, critical discourse and content analysis of 1208 news articles published in twenty-six editions of the *Chronicle* of 1-30 September 2010. The research deliberately focused on September 2010 because it was a month to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the signing of the MDGs. The month of September 2010 was also significant in that a high level United Nations Summit on MDGs was held in New York on 22 to 23 September 2010 to review country progress on the MDGs. In essence, the month of September 2010 was regarded as the month of the MDGs. All news stories except advertisements published in selected twenty six editions of *Chronicle* were coded and analyzed for development journalism. The unit of analysis was a news story. News items were classified into hard news, features, opinion pieces and letters to the editor. News items were categorized into development and non-development news. The definition of development news by Vilanilam (1979 cited in Machado 1982:11) was adopted for this study. He defined development news as:

News relating to the primary, secondary, and tertiary needs of a developing country. Primary needs are food, clothing, and shelter. Secondary needs are development of agriculture, industry and all economic activity, which lead to the fulfilment of the primary needs, plus development of education, literacy, health environment, medical research, family planning, employment, labour welfare, social reforms, national integration and rural and urban development. Tertiary needs are development of mass media, transport, tourism, telecommunication, arts and cultural activities.

The research combined qualitative and quantitative content analysis in examining the presence of development journalism in the *Chronicle* coverage of MDGs. Quantitative content analysis was used to count and measure the number and prominence given to development stories versus non development news. Qualitative content analysis was used

together with critical discourse analysis to identify the dominant discourses about the MDGs in *Chronicle*. The following were research questions for content analysis:

- Did the *Chronicle* practice the principles of development journalism as espoused by Galtung and Vincent, (1992)?
- What was the proportion of development news to other news beats?
- Did the *Chronicle* promote the eight MDGs and which of the MDGs received more prominence?
- Which were the most quoted sources of development news?
- Did the *Chronicle* newspaper give equal voice and access to all the development actors?
- What, if any, was the ideology of the development news covered by the *Chronicle*?

The main purpose of carrying out the critical discourse analysis was to determine the ideology of the development news carried by the *Chronicle*. As a research method, discourse analysis was used to understand how language was used and narratives of development news created. The researcher also used semi-structured interviews with three Senior Journalists at the *Chronicle*. These were selected for the interviews because they held positions of responsibility and had sufficient practical journalism experience. The questions for semi-structured interviews were prepared in advance. The use of semi-structured open-ended qualitative interviews helped the researcher in that the interviewees were allowed to stray a little and as a result, the interviews were flexible. The first step in the data analysis was the content analysis of stories. All data collected was analysed using interpretive techniques such as thematic analysis or coding and textual analysis. Coding is an interpretative technique that both organises the data and provides a means to introduce the interpretations of it. Thus data was organised around themes important to the research questions. Interview data was transcribed, interpreted and analysed using themes. Interview data was presented in narrative form, with pertinent quotations used to illustrate major findings of the study. In order to protect the identity of the *Chronicle* interviewees, full names will not be used in the study.

Findings

Development Journalism in Practice: The *Chronicle* Coverage of MDGs in Zimbabwe

Lack of understanding of development journalism principles and MDGs

Interviews with journalists revealed that they did not have any understanding of development journalism philosophy and principles. The study found that development journalism was not an institutionalized concept and was not clearly articulated in the editorial policy of the *Chronicle*. In instances where the *Chronicle* made efforts to cover development news such coverage was not informed by any theoretical or conceptual framework. Rather, development news was covered like any other news and traditional news values of prominence and newsworthiness were applied in deciding whether or not to publish any development news story. The study also evaluated journalists' knowledge of the MDGs. None of the journalists interviewed could state the purpose or list the eight MDGs. One of the respondents erroneously noted that the MDGs were part of Vision 2020, a Government of Zimbabwe development blueprint that set out goals and priorities for national development in the early 1990s. This ignorance about the MDGs confirmed earlier research

by a coalition of NGOs, the Civil Society MDG Coalition (CSMC) that pointed out that rural communities throughout the country were ignorant of the MDGs, (*News Day*: 8 ; 2010 Oct 19). The study by CSMC revealed that most rural communities confused the MDGs with a new splinter political party from the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). "Some people in rural areas do not know what MDGs are. People think that it's a political party. People in rural areas are living in the dark. There is no effort to enlighten people," observed CSMC in a newspaper article, 2010 October 18, *NewsDay* (8). It was unexpected that journalists at the *Chronicle* could effectively promote the attainment of the MDGs by 2015 when they themselves were oblivious of them. One of the interviewees conceded that there was a need to create awareness of the MDGs amongst journalists before the national media were able to promote their attainment by 2015:

We are able to write 100 development news stories without any reference to the Millennium Development Goals. We need to fully embrace the concept of development journalism and understand what the United Nations Millennium Development Goals are. The challenge is that government never made any real awareness on these MDGs from the onset.

Mwaffisi (1991 cited in Odhiambo 1991: 12) has argued that development journalism "is not reporting about events, but processes, and not reporting about personalities but issues."

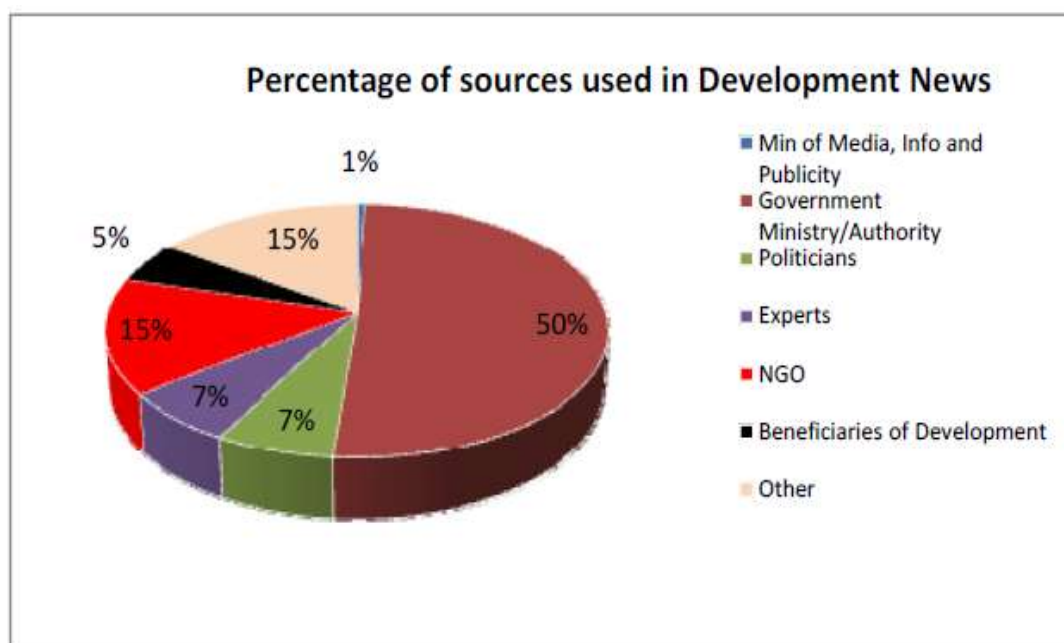
Proportion of development news to other News

Of the 1208 news articles published in twenty-six editions of the *Chronicle* of 1-30 September 2010, 1082 (90%) were non-developmental news. Whereas 126 (10.4%) of the stories published dealt with development issues. Non-development news published included human interest stories, politics, hard news, leisure and entertainment, foreign news and sport. Development news included stories about the MDGs and news relating to agriculture and food security, industry and economic growth, poverty and deprivation, water, shelter, education, health and environment. The results of this quantitative content analysis meant that on average the *Chronicle* ran a total of 47 stories per day, five of which were development news and 42 non-development news. This clearly demonstrated that the newspaper covered a significantly higher proportion of non-development news.

News sources used in development news

Of the 126 development news items analysed, it was established that government ministries or authorities were the most quoted news sources. In 50% of the news government ministries or authorities were quoted as the main news sources. This indicated a dominance of government information sources in news. The most quoted government ministers were those of Education, Sport, Art and Culture and Deputy Minister of Health and Child Welfare. Other government ministers often quoted included Minister of Local Government, Urban and Rural Development, Minister of Water Resources and Management and government officials from line ministries such as the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Infrastructure Development, Meteorological Services Department and the Department of Agriculture Extension Services and the Department of Agriculture Irrigation and Mechanisation. Official from local authorities such as the Rural District Councils and the Bulawayo City Council were also quoted. 15% of the news sources were NGO officials, 14% politicians, 14% government experts/technocrats, and 5% beneficiaries of development and 2% Ministry of Media, Information and Publicity.

Figure 1: *Sources of Development News in Zimbabwe*



The study confirmed findings by McDaniel (1986 in Odhiambo 1991:21) that “development journalism is being used as a vehicle not only for publicizing government programs, but for the promotion of government personalities”. This was particularly true in light of the prominence given to the Ministry of Sports, Education and Culture. McDaniel (1986 in Odhiambo (1991;11) further pointed out, politicians in developing countries “wish to be seen as champions of development issues” and warned, “it might undermine development as a responsibility of the whole population, picturing it instead as an activity of the influential and politically powerful”.

15% of the development news published related to development NGOs, which was a gross underrepresentation considering that NGOs are involved in several development programmes. This underrepresentation of NGO sources in development news was justified by one of the senior reporters in an interview:

We [the *Chronicle* reporters] are not encouraged to use NGO sources. This is because NGOs are generally seen as agents of regime change and not bona fide development agents. But we know for a fact that NGOs are some of the biggest development players in the country. I cannot just write a story about the development programmes being funded by for example DfID (UK Department for International Development), AusAid [Australian Aid], the EU [European Union] without raising the ire of the powers that be.

This observation resonates with findings of a study by Pratt and Manheim (1988) which established that Third World journalists from nine-government controlled newspapers were reluctant to use unofficial sources to increase coverage of development news, and little of that news was critical of the government. Journalistic reliance on government news sources limited any tendency toward critical presentation and evaluation of development programmes in the news media.

Ideology of development news

Another objective of the research was to establish the ideology of development news covered by the *Chronicle*. Ideology is a system of ideas and beliefs. Giddens (1997:73) defined ideology as “shared ideas and beliefs which serve to justify interests of dominant groups”. The concept of ideology was elaborated by Marxist scholar Louis Althusser (1970) in his essay, *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, where he defined ideology as the “imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence”. He argued that the state enforced its ideology through coercive institutions, the repressive state apparatus and the non-coercive institutions, the ideological state apparatus. The repressive state apparatus consisted of coercive institutions such as the army, police and prisons while the ideological state apparatus consisted of non-coercive institutions such as religion, family, school, arts and the media. The state employs the ideological apparatuses to reproduce its ideology through representations in the media. Tsiko (2010) quoted the Zimbabwe Independent Editor, Vincent Kahiya as having said that development news had a political ideology. “A development story had to be told in political language in order for the copy to be used by editors.” According to an interviewee the *Chronicle* development news stories were deliberately coated in political language so as to represent government in a positive light noting that;

The *Chronicle* editorial policy is pro-government and it is difficult to be critical of government. Development news has to be politically correct and consistent with government ideology.

Regarding government progress towards the attainment of the MDGs by 2015, the *Chronicle* blamed the West for imposing sanctions on Zimbabwe. This ideological inclination was confirmed by one of the senior reporters when he noted that it was normal to politicize development stories and mention that lack of development was due to “illegal” sanctions imposed on the country by the West. The Senior Reporter noted;

A good and usable development story is one that includes the colonial historical background, one which highlights the development gains achieved after independence in 1980, the need for land reform, the importance of the empowerment of the black majority and more importantly the adverse impact of sanctions imposed by erstwhile colonial master, Britain and her allies on national development.

The Senior Reporter added that it had become part of the *Chronicle*'s in-house style to include the background on sanctions in everyday copy to the extent that sub-editors did not use any stories that had no such background. In a published essay, *Government versus Independent press*, Bakhsh (n.d) noted that African journalists working for the government media bought into the ideology of the ruling governments to the extent of fervently defending the status quo. Bakhsh (n.d:7) wrote that African journalists have “developed a servile mentality which sees them as footnotes to the narrow ambitions of politicians. The press in many African countries exists only to defend the status quo; it has lost its independence and is happy to sing praises of its master, the government’s sad song of betrayal of the dreams of the African people.”

A critical discourse analysis of the story ‘*Sanctions frustrate efforts to meet MDGs: President*’, the *Chronicle*, 2010 September 22(1) illustrates the point Bakhsh makes. The story quoted President Mugabe as telling the UN High Level meeting in New York that:

Despite our best efforts we fell short of our targets because of illegal and debilitating sanctions imposed on the country and consequently the incidence of poverty in Zimbabwe remains high. As a result of these punitive measures and despite our

economic turnaround economic plan, the Government of Zimbabwe have been prevented from making a positive difference in the lives of the poor, the hungry and destitute among its citizens. This is regrettable because Zimbabwe has a stable economic and political environment. We have the resources, and with the right kind of support from the international community, we have the potential to improve the lives of the people.

In the story President Mugabe was further quoted as blaming Zimbabwe's detractors and advancing the same ideology that Zimbabwe's lack of development was largely due to foreign influences and sanctions:

Even our economy suffered from illegal sanctions imposed on the country by our detractors, we continued to deploy and direct much of our own resources towards the achievement of the targets we set for ourselves. Indeed, we find it very disturbing and regrettable that after we all agreed to work towards the improvement of the lives of our citizens some countries should deliberately work to negate our efforts in that direction.

In his foreword to the 2010 Zimbabwe progress report on MDGs in the UNDP and MoLSS (2010), President Mugabe further advanced the ideology that progress on MDGs were derailed by Western sanctions:

Zimbabwe is convinced that the MDGs are achievable as we continue to consolidate our independence through social, political and economic empowerment of our people, by crafting and implementing pro-poor development policies and programmes. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Zimbabweans for the patriotism, dedication and perseverance they have shown under the weight of illegal sanctions imposed on our country by those opposed to our pro-poor programmes. Our people have dug deep into their resourcefulness in achieving the success we have so far registered in our development programmes.

It was apparent from the above that the *Chronicle* fostered the ideology that Western sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe were to blame for the lack of progress towards the attainment of the MDGs. Although the argument by government that sanctions were to blame for lack of progress towards the attainment of MDGs could not be objectively verified, the *Chronicle* identified itself with the dominant government ideology. Normative theories of media performance suggest that the media are not only a product and a reflection of the history of their own societies but they also play a part in that history. Bourgault (1995 in McQuail 1994: 39) noted:

The history of journalism in [Sub-Saharan Africa] in the 1970s and 1980s is a history of a continent coming to grips with the contradictions in which it found itself. It is a history of the struggle for the newly independent nations to forge a national consciousness among disparate ethnic groups. It is a history of elite policy makers who had clamoured for independence trying now to shore up the newly found freedoms. It is a history of politicians discovering that political freedom from the colonial masters had been easier to achieve than economic prosperity. It is a history, in fact, of the failure of the nation-state and the modernist paradigm to satisfy the hopes of African peoples, elites as well as masses, urbanites as well as rural dwellers.

Problems of development journalism in Zimbabwe

Development journalism not institutionalized

The study found that development journalism was not an institutionalized concept and was not clearly articulated in the editorial policy of the *Chronicle*. Although the *Chronicle* editor

policy could not be immediately availed, the researcher had the opportunity of attending a series of editorial planning meetings commonly referred to as 'Diary Meetings'. In these 'Diary Meetings' the editorial team plan for stories of the day. The reporters give their diarized stories to the News Editor and the News Editor may assign any of the reporters to cover a particular story. It was observed during these 'Diary Meetings' that reporters preferred to cover non-development news stories hence the conclusion that development journalism is not institutionalized. It was also noted that in instances where the *Chronicle* made efforts to cover development news such coverage was not informed by any theoretical or conceptual framework. Rather, development news was covered like any other news and traditional news values of prominence and newsworthiness justified publication of any development news story.

Tabloidisation of news

Tabloidisation was established as one of the key factors that hindered the practice of development journalism by the *Chronicle*. Tabloidisation can be defined as involving a shift in the priorities within a given medium away from news and information toward an emphasis on entertainment or the emergence of pervasive sensationalism in the media. Sparks (2000 cited in Harris 2005:4) defined a tabloid newspaper as one that "devotes relatively little attention to politics, economics, and society and relatively much to diversions like sports, scandal, and popular entertainment; it devotes relatively much attention to the personal and private lives of people, both celebrities and ordinary people, and relatively little to political processes, economic developments, and social changes." Grisprud (1992 in Harris (2005:5) stated that well-known features of tabloidisation are sensationalism, personalisation and the focus on private concerns. The quantitative content analysis showed that the *Chronicle* was increasingly becoming sensational. For example, the *Chronicle*, September 11, 2010 carried a story entitled '*Call for AIDS levy to extend to informal sector*'. This story was relegated and hidden on the second page of the newspaper without any photograph. In contrast the first page of the newspaper had two sensational news stories deliberately put to draw readers' attention. The stories were: '*Homeless man survives 11 000 volt electricity jolt*' published with a picture of the survivor and '*Mystery fire terrorises Magwegwe residents*'. These first page stories apart from showing the effect of tabloidisation were bent on attracting the readers' interest to purchase the copy and push up sales. While the *Chronicle* is not tabloid in format, the newspaper had adopted some of the tabloid styles in a fashion referred to as broadloidisation.

Commercial imperative

The *Chronicle* existed as a business entity. It had a commercial imperative to make profits. For it to make profits, it had to sell to audiences and to advertisers and also push hard copy sales. For News Editor, "development journalism does not sell." It is for this reason that the *Chronicle* had reluctantly pursued development journalism. The *Chronicle* had no segmented audience that had an interest in reading issues related to the MDGs and development news. Tsiko (2010) buttresses the above when she observed that newspaper editors in Zimbabwe said development journalism did not help to sell newspapers as human interest, sports and arts news did. She cited the *Zimbabwe Independent* Editor who argued that political news overrode development journalism because the country had been so politicised that if one had put a story on development as a lead, most papers in the country would go bankrupt.

Lack of specialised training

Another major factor affecting the practice of development journalism by the *Chronicle* was lack of specialisation on development news and on the MDGs. This lack of specialisation had meant that the *Chronicle* did not comprehensively practice development journalism and adequately cover the MDGs. Shah (1990) cited in Obeng-Quaidoo (1988:8) commented that the “level of development news reported depends on the levels of training journalists receive.” He established that journalists who receive special training on issues like rural development, health, population and social issues tend to cover a high proportion of stories dealing with such issues. Obeng-Quaidoo (1988:12) cited journalism scholar Walter Lippmann who underscored the need for specialization thus:

Not every reader of every newspaper cares to know about or could understand all the activities of mankind. But there are some readers, specialized in some subject, who have to be alerted to important developments of even the most specialized activities. For this, the profession of journalism is becoming specialized. The journalist is becoming subject to the compulsion to respect and observe the intellectual disciplines and the organized body of knowledge which the specialist in any field possesses.

The *Chronicle* was disadvantaged in that it had general journalists who did not have any form of specialisation in development issues. Due to the lack of media specialisation in development issues and the MDGs in particular, the Media Roundtable on Millennium Development Goals concluded that media coverage of MDGs by Zimbabwean journalists included “incorrect use of data, terms and concepts; sensationalism; focus on the problem and not on the solution; lack of interest in development issues, prejudice against stigmatised groups and lack of skills to handle ethical dilemmas among other issues” (Tsiko, 2010:1).

Development slump

A key factor that affected the *Chronicle's* practice of development journalism was the development slump in the country. Zimbabwe had witnessed ten years of negative economic growth due to hyperinflation. Furthermore, the government had failed to adequately finance and deliver on promised development projects. Against this, there had not been many significant development projects for the media to report on. This view of the development slump was advanced by an interviewee who said that:

Development projects have remained in limbo for a long time and there is no development to report in the news. For instance the Bulawayo- Airport-Nkayi road has been in limbo for a long time. The *Chronicle* has been reporting about the Matabeleland Zambezi Water Project and Gwaai- Shangani water schemes since 1991 and nothing has happened to bring water to the people of Matabeleland. To date these projects are still incomplete. If there is development slump in the country the media cannot be expected to engage in any form development journalism.

A Senior Reporter interviewed also added that due to the development slump and the politicization of development, media audiences were disinterested in development issues. He said:

People are now skeptical of the development processes in this country because they have received many empty promises of development. If you write that a certain development project has been completed by the government half of the readers will believe that and half will assume it is simply government politicking, at worse they will say its government propaganda.

Westernisation of Zimbabwean journalism

The study also found that journalism at the *Chronicle* is largely influenced by Westernisation as one interviewee witnesses:

We cannot just smuggle a development news story in the name of development journalism. Development journalism is equally dependent on news values. For a development story to be published, it depends on who is involved, what they say and whether what they say or do is newsworthy to be published as a development news story.

The impact of Western news values on development journalism was elaborated by one of the senior reporters interviewed who said the *Chronicle* News Editor often complained when he repeatedly diarised a development news story in order to achieve impact. He said the News Editor always worried of timeliness and on a number of occasions blocked his attempt to cover the Matabeleland Zambezi Water Project by arguing that the story was tired. This view, that journalism was a profession guided by the news values of time is extended by American sociologist Michael Schudson (1986) who described journalists as persons with a 'chronomentality'. Schlesinger (1977) underlined the same point when he described journalists as 'members of a stop-watch culture'. Patterson (1997 cited in Obeng-Quaidoo 1988:7) underlined the same point:

Journalists respond less to the pressing demand of issues than to the relentless churn of the news cycle. Each day is a fresh start, a new reality. Novelty is prized, as is certainty. Journalists must have a story to tell, and it must be different from yesterday's. The speed of the news cycle and the relentless search for fresh stories steer the journalist toward certain developments and away from others. Controlled by the stop-watch, dedicated to actuality, obsessed with novelty, journalists are continuously in a seemingly losing battle to react to (the latest) events. The invisibility of issues requires journalism's capacity to respond.

Thus the use of Western news values such as timeliness, bizarreness had contributed to the under representation of development news in the *Chronicle*. Different scholars, such as Kasoma (1996), have even questioned the existence of an African journalism. They have argued that journalism is largely a Western profession grounded in Western models and theories of education. Kasoma (1996) in Bakhsh (n.d:7) notes:

The tragedy facing African journalism of the 1990s and beyond [...] is that the continent's journalists have closely imitated the professional norms of the (West), which they see as the epitome of good journalism. Consequently, the African mass media's philosophical foundations, their aims and objectives have been blue-prints of the media in the industrialized societies of the (West). The West has certainly influenced African journalism.

Juniorisation of the journalism profession

Another challenge for development journalism in Zimbabwe is the "juniorisation" of the journalism profession. Using the *Chronicle* as a case in point, it was noted that the newsroom was staffed with junior reporters who had recently graduated from university and other institutions of higher learning. These junior journalists who completely outnumber veteran journalists had little interest in development journalism. In an interview with the News Editor, a veteran journalist noted that the current crop of journalists at the *Chronicle* grew up in years of development failure in Zimbabwe and did not appreciate the meaning of development journalism. As a result junior journalists did not find any attraction in development journalism.

Urbanised nature of Journalism and Journalists

The urbanised nature of journalism and lack of adequate transport to cover rural areas has led to the slow adoption of development journalism by the *Chronicle*. Development journalism requires journalists to travel to rural areas to speak with people affected and in the process gaining an enormous range of development visions and 'how-to' insights (Galtung and Vincent: 1992). Dixit (1993), former Regional Director for Asia-Pacific of the Inter Press Service (IPS) wrote an internal memo to his staff that development journalism could not be done practically while sitting in one's air-conditioned office. He added that development reporting means travel and could not be done overnight on one of those sudden deadlines. Freier (2001: 13) observed that increasing urbanisation have led to an under representation of the rural areas in journalism;

The journalist in Africa is –even more than his/her colleague in Europe or America- an urban animal. He/she lives in the city and reports the city. The dire conditions of his/her poor relatives in remote areas are probably not known to her, but are the subject of his/her journalistic endeavours. Lack of transport, poor infrastructure and vast distances contribute to this black out.

For the *Chronicle*, the impact of urbanisation was compounded by the lack of transport to cover rural areas. This had negatively impacted the practice of development journalism. The *Chronicle* News Editor said they “failed to reach rural communities because we have no cars. Our vehicle fleet is depleted. We are a government paper and we do not have any donor funding to embark on development journalism.”

Development journalism is expensive

The remarks above by the News Editor indicate that development journalism is expensive to cover, compared for instance with political issues or scandals. Some of the successful development journalism projects in the past have been funded by international donor agencies such as the World Bank and agencies of the United Nations such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), United Nations Educational Scientific and Communications Organisation (UNESCO) and the UNDP. Without adequate funding, development journalism cannot thrive. The Press Foundation of Asia which pioneered development journalism was formed with funding from the Ford Foundation. The Andrew Lees Trust Project Radio in Southern Madagascar which was responsible for promoting MDGs was funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) and the Panos Institute, London. Other known examples of development journalism projects include the long-running drama *Soul City* of South Africa which receives funding from multiple donors.

Prospects for development journalism in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwean development journalism has a lot of prospects as journalists themselves acknowledge. According to the News Editor “every reader of the *Chronicle* has a rural origin of some sort and would want to read about what happens back home. It is therefore the role of development journalism to inform people about what developments have occurred back home.” He further added that the advantage of development journalism was that it “gives people hope of a better future, this hope of development means that life is not gloomy.” Development journalism can be used for mobilizing people to participate in development programmes. Currently, Zimbabweans are skeptical about government development projects. Development journalism can mobilise people around development and help people

to share information and exchange ideas in a positive and productive fashion. This dialogue can be enriched by understanding how development issues affect people and generate how to insights. Through development journalism, people are able to articulate and share their own opinions, needs, problems and abilities, thereby influencing decision making processes and policy.

Last, development journalism can change people's life-styles. Development journalism can focus on the long and sensitive process of changing behaviour and life-styles by raising awareness and public understanding of issues such as HIV and AIDS. Thus, if properly applied, development journalism can promote the attainment of goals for national development and the MDGs. One of the merits of development journalism is that it brings development news to the people. News about development is important in stimulating further development.

Recommendations

The problems that journalists at the *Chronicle* face and contribute to their failure to engage in development journalism despite their desire for it have been identified. The journalists and those in training need specialised training programmes in development journalism. This will enable graduate journalists to gain relevant skills to cover development news. Refresher courses for practising journalists would be useful in imparting skills on how to cover specialised beats such as gender, environment, HIV and AIDS, poverty and other development issues. This will also improve reportage of development news as issues rather than mere events.

There is an urgent need to re-theorise development journalism. Some academics prefer the term advancing journalism. This theory sees the media as an instrument of social justice and a tool for achieving beneficial social change in line with a nationally established policy. Due to the negative connotations associated with the term developmental journalism, Shah (1996) suggested its replacement with the term emancipatory journalism to facilitate recognizing a role for journalists as participants in a process of progressive social change. Emancipatory journalism requires not only provision of socially relevant information, but also journalistic activism in challenging and changing oppressive structures; giving individuals in marginalized communities a means of voicing, critiquing and articulating alternative visions of society. Shah (1996) adds that emancipatory journalism encourages 'journalists to abandon the role of a neutral observer while reporting in a manner that is thorough, deeply researched, and historically and culturally grounded, and that promotes social change in favour of the dispossessed.

Development journalism should be uniquely practiced to suit particular contexts. This may necessitate that Zimbabwe develops its unique form of development journalism that will be standardised and agreed upon by journalists from both the private and public media. The Zimbabwean development journalism model will be responsible for advancing commonly agreed goals for national development. Such a development journalism model will be taught at the country's journalism schools while short courses will have to be organised for already practising journalists. In addition a responsible body such as the Zimbabwe Media Commission will regulate the operations of the media to ensure that development is practiced without overstepping the bounds to become partisan. This model for development journalism proffered for Zimbabwe will first of all promote national healing and unity across the political divide and then prioritise the goals of national development.

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