THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN MONITORING FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT

MODULE PRESENTED TO THE AFRICAN FORUM AND NETWORK ON DEBT AND DEVELOPMENT (ARODAD) 2-018 ZIMBABWE MEDIA TRAINING WORKSHOP, HARARE 8 AND 9 NOVEMBER

Tafataona Mahoso, PhD
Chief Executive Officer
Zimbabwe Media Commission
Cellphone 0712-415-085
Email: information@mediacommission.co.zw
INTRODUCTION

The African Forum and Network on Debt and Development (AFRODAD) in its concept paper on Public/Private Partnerships and Financing for Development states the challenges underlying the need for this capacity building workshop as including the following:

- Dangerously limited knowledge among affected communities in the SADC region concerning Public/Private Partnerships and the potential long term risks for communities arising from those partnerships;

- Similarly inadequate knowledge and capacity among civil society organisations interested in ppps and their financing to be able effectively to monitor the same partnerships; and
- The need to develop thorough knowledge on Public/Private Partnerships and for such knowledge to be generated, shared and deployed by civil society organizations, communities and the Press in order for these to be able adequately to monitor PPPs and their tendency to privatize basic social services in the interest private of capital and at the expense of communities.
MEDIA – RELATED CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED IN THIS MODULE AND SUGGESTIONS FOR TACKLING THEM

The main thesis of this module is that current trends both in journalism training and media practice render the media woefully inadequate to enable civil society organisations and the public (concerned communities) to monitor Public/Private Partnerships, their financing and their contribution to the privatization of services provided by central governments and municipalities.

It is argued first that in order for the Press to monitor Public/Private Partnerships and financing for development, journalism training needs to deepen modules for what used to be called Development Journalism with emphasis on financing for development.
The module identifies the challenges which would have to be tackled at training institutions and within mass media houses before journalists and editors could contribute meaningfully to the knowledgeable and effective monitoring of Public/Private Partnerships as well as development financing agreements and other arrangements likely to affect social service delivery.
WHAT THE CONSTITUTION OF ZIMBABWE PROVIDES ON BALANCED DEVELOPMENT

Both trainee journalists and practicing journalists need to be familiar with what Constitutional Amendment Number 20 of 2013 says about development.

On national development, Section 13 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe provides as follows:

(1) The state and all institutions and agencies of government at every level must endeavour to facilitate rapid and equitable development, and in particular must take measures to:
(a) promote private initiative and self-reliance;

(b) foster agricultural, commercial, industrial, technological and scientific development;

(c) foster development of industrial and commercial enterprises in order to empower Zimbabwean citizens; and

(d) bring about balanced development of the different areas of Zimbabwe, in particular a proper balance in the rural and urban areas.
(2) Measures referred to in this section must involve the people in the formulation of development plans and programmes that affect them.

Chapter Two, Section 9 requires the state at every level to “adopt policies and legislation to develop efficiency, competence, accountability and transparency, personal integrity and financial probity in all institutions and agencies of government at every level and in every public institution in particular.”
Section 13 Subsection 4 requires the state to “ensure that [local] communities benefit from the resources in their areas.”

Section 68 elevates to a constitutional level the right of every person to administrative justice when dealing with bodies, organizations and authorities who make administrative decisions affecting him or her.

This Section 68 provision of the supreme law of the land implies that all decisions on the delivery of services going to the people, for instance - -
must be explained and understood
must be notified in good time to those they are likely to affect
must, before being carried out, wait for responses from the affected stakeholders until the notice time passes.

Section 194 (1) of the Constitution requires public officials to adhere to the following principles:

(a) a high standard of professional ethics;
(b) efficient and economical use of resources;
(c) impartial, fair and equitable provision of water and other essential resources and services without bias;
(d) responsiveness to the needs of the people in reasonable time; and
(e) the promotion of active participation by stakeholders in decisions, for example, concerning the abstraction, protection and delivery of water or the delivery of education and health services.

Section 196, Subsections (1), (2) and (3) elevates requirements for the public behaviour of officers working for any public agency serving the community. The conduct of such officers must-

- be consistent with the purposes and objectives of the Constitution of Zimbabwe;
- demonstrate respect for the people and readiness to serve them;

- inspire and promote confidence in the office and responsibilities of the officer concerned;

- stay clear of any actual or perceived conflict between the personal interests of the officer and the interests of the public to be served; and

- demonstrate and inspire the following qualities in carrying out their duties: objectivity, impartiality, honesty, accountability, discipline and commitment.
Journalists tend to report development stories out of context because they are not familiar with recent economic history. One way of indicating what this context should contain is to suggest a random collection of relevant books and other literature. The list is merely meant

Robert E. Woods’s book *From Marshall Plan to Debt Crisis: Foreign Aid and Development choices in the World Economy* can serve to provide a clear description of the foreign aid regime developed and imposed through what is called the Washington Consensus.
This foreign aid regime described by Wood is what is now being challenged by China and the BRICKS countries. It would be interesting, for instance to contrast the post-World War Two foreign aid regime in Wood’s book with approaches by China or India; and the source for such a sharp contrast could be provided by reading economist Dambisa Moyo’s *Dead Aid: Why Aid is Not Working and How There is a Better Way For Africa.*

On aid, food security and the environment, two old books give an excellent background. One is Lloyd Timberlake's *Africa in Crisis: The Causes, Cures of Environmental Bankruptcy.* The other is Carol B Thompson’s *Harvests Under Fire: Regional Co-Operation for Food Security in Southern Africa.*
On the global context of the same issues pre-occupying AFRODAD now, there are two books that could be suggested. One is Canadian journalist Linda McQuaig’s *The Cult of Impotence: Selling the Myth of Powerlessness in the Global Economy*. The other one is Michel Chessndovsky’s *The Globalisation of Poverty and the New World Order*, with good chapters on aid and the Somalian and Rwandan crises of 2004 and 1994 respectively.

A frightening classic is Naomi Klein’s *The Shock Doctrine: The rise of Disaster Capitalism*.

It is frightening for the conclusions it reaches:
First, the neoliberal concepts of privatization and Public/Private Partnerships are so radical and so far-reaching as to embrace even the State’s outsourcing and privatization of war. If aspects of war can be outsourced and privatized, as happened in Iraq and Afghanistan, there is nothing to stop the neoliberal capitalist state from privatizing public health and public education through Public/Private Partnerships.

- Second, because of the concentration of power in finance against productive sectors and against other forms of capital, capitalism can now profit from human disasters such as environmental catastrophes and wars.
Third, privatization is dangerous because it makes the state subservient to corporate interests, the most extreme being the subcontracting of many aspects of war to private corporations who also own and control mass media empires.

Fourth, the shock doctrine implied in the title of Klein’s book is important because it refers to economic shock, the shock of war and violence, as well as to the media’s reliance on shock and sensationalism for impact. At times the impact sought is to convince citizens to agitate for wars which are in the interest of private corporations who also own and control large chunks of the global media.
Fifth, a media industry and a journalism concentrating on competition for impact is ill-disposed to monitor Public/Private Partnerships, how they are financed and how they affect communities.
B: CURRENT MEDIA DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS MILITATING AGAINST EFFECTIVE MONITORING OF PPPS AND DEVELOPMENT FINANCING

(1) Post-Modernism

The first practice is post-modernism which we cannot fully explain for lack of space but which for the purpose of this module should be defined as a belief, theory and practice which discourages analysis, limits explanation and ignores the need for coherence in the telling of our own story: choosing instead to emphasize appearance, impression and spectacle in pursuit of instant impact.
Relying heavily on the creation of perception and impression, the post-modern technique is great for marketing but bad for critical thinking, analysis and the weighing of options based on elaborate explanations.

Underlying this media practice is the assumption that the attention spans of most readers are too short to tolerate detailed analyses or explanations. Therefore tit-bits and sound bites will suffice.
(ii) Tabloidization

The second related practice is tabloidization, which is a media practice and tendency to limit speech to sound bites and blips and to cut all stories to no more than a paragraph or two while focusing on loud colours, images and pictures, based on the assumption that no one has the attention span or capacity to wait for or sit through serious explanations or analyses of events. Therefore we can conclude that tabloidization is the print media’s adoption and application of post-modernism. We have also seen the tendency of television to bombard audiences with so-called entertainment and advertisements at the expense of current affairs and documentaries. Radio shows have now been reduced to young people talking gossip to themselves and women who spend hours just giggling at the microphone. In Zimbabwe in recent years have seen the cover page of The Chronicle newspaper often resembling that of H-Metro.
(iii) Narcissism

The third related practice and condition is narcissism which may even lead to solipsism. Narcissism can be defined as excessive pre-occupation with oneself and lack of interest in listening to others or understanding others.

All these practices result not only in the narrowing of texts to tit-bits and spectacles but also in the shrinkage of one’s worldview to only those things that matter to myself, my family, my ethnic group or just my generation.

The combined effects of these practices include the following:

- Politically, the unity of all citizens is abandoned unless these are citizens willing to unite around just myself and my small group.
Balanced development of the entire economy to benefit and unite all the people comes to be seen as impossible and unnecessary because the narcissist has no concept, feeling or experience of the larger nation,
unless that nation agrees to exist solely for facilitating the self-enrichment of the individual and his/her group. The economy is therefore narrowed to Harare, Bulawayo or just the banks my region or my sector and my businesses.

- History has to be condemned or dismissed as “water under the bridge” because it reminds us too much about struggle and bad times and it prevents us from trampling on sacred values, sacred places and revered heroes. To the narcissist and solipsist, history is not just boring: it is burdensome.

- Heroes are acceptable as long as they serve as decorations for my current achievements or ambitions. They cannot be foregrounded as torch-bearers of an on-going revolution which requires even me to
change my ways or to see a common future with all Zimbabweans. Therefore war-veterans become either a threat or a burden to be discarded.

The emotional and spiritual predisposition which makes the population extremely prone to conflict in a neocolonial situation such as that of Rwanda or Zimbabwe is narcissism which, in terms of the need for knowledge, produces solipsism rather than conscientization as in the pungwe of the liberation years.

(iv) **Destruction of the Public Interest and Public Arena**

The western imperialist communications strategy which maximises the exploitation of narcissism and solipsism is postmodernism.
In *The Fall of Public Man: On the Social Psychology of Capitalism*, Richard Sennet defines *narcissism* as the collapse of the public sphere as the space for the peaceful conduct of citizen relations because of its overloading with private sphere concerns or personal concerns. At worst, narcissism may result in national events and national platforms being abused for personal aggrandizement of individuals at the expense of the nation and national vision.

In the *Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, Christopher Lasch agrees with Sennet that *narcissism* on a social scale causes the breakdown of the public sphere as the space for the peaceful conduct of citizen relations. But he does not agree that the cause is the overburdening of public life with private matters. The breakdown is therefore in both the private sphere (the space of love, friendship, intimacy) and the public sphere (the space of citizen relations).
The cause for both breakdowns is the collapse of moral fibre and memory, the destruction of unhu and history under post-modern capitalism. What causes this breakdown is “the incorporation of grandiose object images as a defence against anxiety and guilt” or a “psychic formation in which love rejected turns back to the self as hatred.” The narcissistic generation is deeply motivated by self-hatred which in Zimbabwe is hatred of the African identity and heritage.

(v) **Mass Media as purveyors of alienated discourse**

In simple language, postmodern capitalism has created an alienated middleclass whose children (the equivalent of our lost generation) feel unloved and abandoned by their “parents” and therefore hate them. In addition to hating their parents intensely, these children also feel extremely insecure and guilty. They feel insecure because they have no confidence in relating to others and to the world with competence; and they turn their
hatred of their unresponsive parents against themselves and against the world in general. War veterans in Zimbabwe are the iconic “parents” who gave birth to the nation through independence and sired and raised the current generation of youths.

But all these feelings of self-hatred cannot be expressed directly, either because society and the work place do not allow direct expressions of such negative feelings or, even if they do so allow, the consequences of openly expressing hate and rage are catastrophic for the individual. So feelings about past experiences and past relations have to be deflected and disguised to avoid pain and open conflict. This is where media come in. Hatred of oneself and one’s own parents and grandparents at home is therefore given free reign via the media!
This is where the postmodern strategy of communicating and the narcissistic character and way of relating come together.

The most important common feature between the two is fantasy. The narcissistic character fails to separate “images of self” from “objects” and persons outside the self. “These images fuse to form a defence” against bad memories and bad experiences of the past.

From two opposite ends of the world, two types of narcissists find each other. The neocolonial narcissist copes with self-hatred, insecurity, anger and anxiety by adopting an attitude of “blind optimism” about the generosity of the western imperialist and his agents, the NGOs. The neo-colonial narcissist “has little capacity for sublimation [or creative originality and autonomy].” He or she yearns for sponsorship and rescue by the donor or any patron.
He fantasized as super-parent. *He therefore depends on others [foreign sponsors and patrons] for constant infusions of approval and admiration. He must attach [himself] to someone, living an almost parasitic existence. At the same time, his fear of emotional dependence, together with his manipulative, exploitive approach to relations, makes these relations bland, superficial, and deeply unsatisfying.”* He or she cannot maintain deep, organic relationships which require loyalty and commitment. This leads to rampant corruption of the youths.

The imperialist mass media and cultural projects (designed for the South only) help to sustain the dependence of the neocolonial narcissist.
In other words, the narcissist in Europe and North America needs the neo-colonial middleclass narcissist in the South. According to British writer Mick Hume: “... the crisis that has brought all this [grand posturing] about is not in Africa, but in Britain. There is a crisis of authority afflicting the political class, and a crisis of common values in our society.”

This means the elites in imperialist society, just like the elites in Zimbabwe, have raised a generation of narcissists afflicted by feelings of emptiness, purposelessness, self-doubt, self-hatred and moral bankruptcy which require massaging through postmodern fantasies and spectacles of invincibility against elders especially.
“There is a poverty of leadership [among the new generation] at every level, and a dearth of any sense of purpose that is bigger than oneself. Against this background in British life, Africa has become an all purpose [postmodernist] stage on which everybody from a pop star [such as Madonna or Geldorf] to a politician [such as Tony Blair] can try to show off their moral worth and sincerity. Everybody is keen to emphasize that the primary purpose of this summer’s events [in 2005] is to raise, not cash but ‘awareness’ – in particular, a self-awareness that we are on the side ofangles in Africa.”
We must therefore define solipsism as the information outcome of a narcissistic education by referring to Edward T Lewis, President of St Mary’s College in Maryland, USA, according to The Washington Post of 16 January 1984.

“As a result, many of these students ... have no sense of their past, no sense of their roots. They are victimized by a sort of solipsism in which they perceive themselves as self-created,
existing entirely in the present. Locked in a concern for the immediate and strictly personal, they possess little sense of the shared values of a community. They clearly believe that one must decide for oneself -- with no responsibility to the past, no obligation to the future. For the most part, they recognize only an obligation to survive.”

We have cited this passage at length because it explains certain aspects of the narcissistic personality, who communicates solipsism, which The Brockhampton Dictionary of Ideas defines as:

“a view that maintains that the self is the only thing that can be known to exist .. The solipsist sees himself or herself as the only individual in existence, assuming other people to be a reflection of his or her own consciousness.”
Neocolonial education and donor-sponsored politics have brought us close to this extreme horror.

We must confront post-modernist deceptions via media; we must confront the ingrained hatred of our history by our own children; and we must counter overwhelming tendencies toward solipsism in education and religion.

It won’t be easy but it must be done.

The postmodernist deception comes from confusing history with appearance, costume and decoration. As Joe Staines states:
“Pastiche, parody and playful quotation from the past became the order of the day ... Notions of good and bad taste became irrelevant ... form no longer followed function; it positively undermined it. Nowhere was this more spectacularly apparent than in Jean-Paul Gaultier’s costume designs for pop star Madonna -- the ultimate post-modern entertainer: manufactured, provocative, deliberately blurring public and private, fact and fantasy; and above all, ironic.”
Financialisation

Financialisation is not a media trend but a global corporate trend manifesting itself both as a corporate practice and a corporate doctrine/ideology. However, most media reports on Public/Private Partnerships and financing for development demonstrate failure by the reporter or editor to understand how the doctrine of financialism distorts communication on development financing.

As a practice it means the control of productive sectors through finance which often results not only in financial speculation and the manipulation of share values unrelated to actual productive value.

As a doctrine, financialism means the promotion of the power and
mystique of finance, financial assets and financial instruments at the expense of the whole economy. The power and mystique are often enforced through financial warfare such as what brought down the Mexican Peso in 1992 and the South East Asian currencies in 1997.

The most dangerous effect of financialisation as doctrine and as practice is the replacement of value with price, leading to the destruction of value through price manipulation.

The relevance of this to efforts to monitor Public/Private Partnerships and how they are financed is that once the power and mystique of the financial sector are established; communities, civil society organisations and journalists become too intimidated by the power, language and mystique of financiers and financial institutions to be able to monitor them effectively. George Soros is one of those
notorious financial speculators and he has been clever enough to sponsor journalists and civil society organisations.
MARKETING VERSUS JOURNALISM AND CURRENT AFFAIRS

What the AFRODAD project is seeking to restore is development journalism specialising in the monitoring and investigation of Public/Private Partnerships.

Apart from deepening the teaching of development journalism in media training institutions, there is need to restore current affairs programmes especially on radio and television. This can be done by offering incentives in the form of grants or awards.
For ZBC radio and TV channels, both training and some financing would be necessary. DJs should not anchor current affairs programmes. Radio stations should desist from relying on listeners with Twitter, WhatsApp, and sms to drive programmes discussing national development issues because such listeners represent too narrow a section of the population by virtue of the restricted ownership of the gadgets used.