

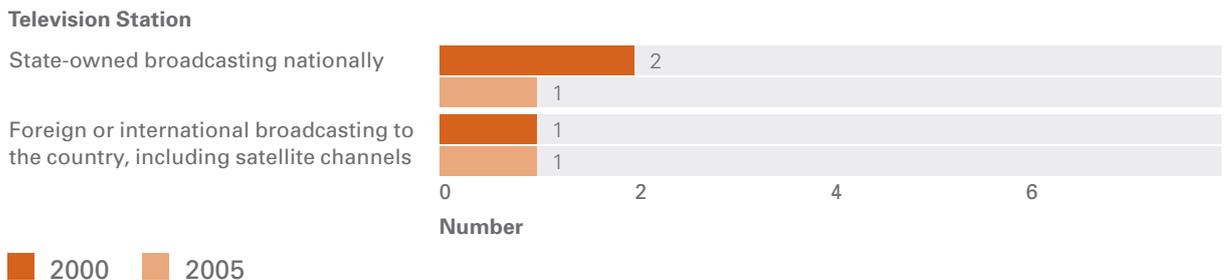


# 6. Television

## 6.1 Key changes and developments in the television marketplace in the past five years

The TV industry in Zimbabwe showed a decline in 2001 and has remained stagnant ever since. The state-owned Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC), now operating as Zimbabwe Broadcasting Holdings (ZBH), operates the only station on air. The ZBC, which had two TV channels in the 1990s, rented one of them (TV 2) to private broadcasters who would broadcast their content at different times of the day and pay the ZBC. These were Munhumutapa African Broadcasting Corporation and Joy TV. This arrangement was stopped in 2001, when the Broadcasting Service Act came into force, and also when the ZBC was changed to ZBH through the ZBC Commercialisation Act 2001. ZBH now use one channel, formerly called TV 1 but now called ZTV. ZBH is divided into commercial units with ZTV and the four radio stations being separate business units under one holding company.

**Figure 7: Broadcasting and Ownership Status of Television Stations**



Source: ZARF 2000-2005

Apart from the one state-owned ZTV channel, the other service available nationally to Zimbabweans, but only on a subscription pay-TV basis, is the South African-based MultiChoice Africa DStv. DStv has expanded its subscriber base since 2000, owing to the poor programming at ZTV and the political interference that influences programmes. DStv's channels are all foreign and access is through monthly subscription paid for in foreign currency.

There are no regional or local TV services in Zimbabwe.

## **6.2 Investment and growth in the television sector in the past five years**

There has been no growth in the TV industry in Zimbabwe over the past five years. All applications for licensing have been turned down by the broadcast regulator BAZ. State-run ZTV is struggling to pay its workers and source any new equipment. The Iranian government has, however, helped ZTV to digitalise. Unfortunately, the process is slow because ZBH cannot pay for some of the equipment and is incapacitated by the lack of skilled staff. Advertising revenue has declined owing to the economic problems and also concerns about the operations of ZTV, especially its open support for the ruling ZANU–PF party (Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Transport and Communications, 2006).

## **6.3 Plurality, ownership and control**

The government wholly owns and controls ZTV, and no dissenting voices are aired. The governance structure of ZBH, including the appointment of the Board, is linked and controlled by the parent ministry, the Ministry of Information and Publicity. ZTV has endeavoured to increase the coverage of non-political or non-controversial voices through programmes targeting farmers, children, women and the disabled. But these programmes are created to support government policy through using predominantly government sources.

## **6.4 Diversity**

Programming on ZTV covers a wide range of issues from health, politics and economics to entertainment and educational programmes. Most of the entertainment programmes are, however, foreign programmes, and ZTV has so far failed to meet the 75% local content quota set out in the Broadcasting Services Act. ZTV's news programmes predominantly use government sources, particularly for political issues (MMPZ, 2002). The ruling party dominates political news coverage. Female voices are minimal, with research indicating that just 17% of the voices used in stories are female (MISA & Gender Links, 2003).

The MultiChoice DStv satellite pay-TV service carries foreign channels, including news channels from the BBC and CNN, and entertainment services.

## 6.5 Quality of television output and programming

The quality of television programming has declined owing to lack of equipment, lack of skilled manpower and political interference. ZBH needs to be transformed into a truly independent public-service broadcaster, both in its governance structure and programming. To improve television quality, there is a need for:

- an independent broadcasting and telecommunications regulatory body;
- the repeal of the Broadcasting Services Act of 2001;
- the licensing of new players (especially commercial and community TV stations); and,
- improved access to training.

## 6.6 Specific challenges

The growth of the television marketplace in Zimbabwe is tied to the policy framework governing the industry. The continued stranglehold of the government on ZBH, and the lack of licensing of new players, has resulted in lack of trust in the programming of ZTV, especially its news programmes which are seen as public relations and propaganda exercises for the ruling party. This has put off advertisers. ZBH is saddled with financial problems and also a serious skills shortage, caused in part by the dismissal of senior staff and poor salaries. The growth of the industry can only be guaranteed if the government changes its attitude and policies towards opening up the industry to private players, and institutes changes that would make ZBH a public broadcaster with clear accountability and management structures.

### Key findings

- Zimbabwe has one TV station, ZTV, owned and controlled by the state.
- There is one subscription TV service available via satellite, the MultiChoice DStv bouquet from South Africa.
- No private players have been licensed since 2001, when the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA) was passed.
- ZBH's ZTV service is not representative of all voices; the Minister of Information and Publicity appoints its Board and its programming content is dictated from that same Ministry.