

Hativagone Mushonga

Author: [IWPR](#)

A few years ago my world seemed to crumble around me when the newspaper I worked for was closed down by the authorities.

I had become unemployed overnight, my livelihood snatched away. For an independent woman, who could fend and provide a comfortable life for her children, I was reduced to near destitution and had to depend on handouts from close family members. For several months, I lost my dignity.

After many years of working as a journalist, I suddenly could not practice the profession I had trained for and loved so passionately.

It was not easy to get a job in Zimbabwe, where the media environment has been shrinking over the years.

“[During my time working for IWPR,] I have moved away from being a reporter to being a true journalist, with good analytical skills.”

“I became one of the first writers to contribute to the Zimbabwe project, in what was a turning point in my life.”

At one point, I became a cross border trader to earn a living. I imported clothing and spare car parts from South Africa. Each time I travelled to and from South Africa, I would ask myself what an educated professional had been reduced to.

Fortunately for me, I then was asked to contribute stories to IWPR. I became one of the Zimbabwe project's first reporters, in what was a turning point in my life.

On a personal level, IWPR has helped me immensely. My children are able to go to good schools. And I am now able to provide them with decent accommodation. In addition, I am able to pay help the rest of my family with school fees and medical bills.

Professionally, I have grown over the years. I have moved away from being a reporter to being a true journalist, with good analytical skills.

Before IWPR, although I wrote human interest stories, my main focus was politics. I have now learnt that it is ordinary people's voices that matter.

The less obvious reports focusing on members of the public are the greatest stories that tell the true story of Zimbabwe. To understand Zimbabwe's politics and way of life, one has to talk to an ordinary Zimbabwean.

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Stories about people dying in Zimbabwe due to unaffordable health care, or about a woman who wakes up at midnight to fetch water and spends the day moving from one queue to the next, or about a

grandmother who can barely provide one meal help convey the realities of Zimbabwe to the world.

I would like to believe that through some of my stories, I am able to take a person in Wrexham, Liverpool, New York, or Sydney into the home of an ordinary Zimbabwean single mother struggling to survive.

I learnt to describe what I wanted the reader to see to help him or her to visualise the difficult lives which Zimbabweans are living.

I hope I have been able to show the world that although Zimbabweans have proven to be resilient, a person's spirit can eventually be broken if no solution is found. A once proud nation has now been turned into a country of beggars.

I have also learned to analyse the implications of the government's policies and decisions made by political parties.

What I loved the most about working for IWPR is the professionalism of the organisation, as well as the fact that it does not shy away from controversial subjects.

I would like to believe that IWPR was the first organisation to point out flaws in the MDC at a time when no one wanted to write critical stories on the party.

Of all the online publications that were established in the last four years, IWPR is one of the few that has carried balanced stories and has remained professional.

For me, maintaining professional standards is important because I feel strongly that journalism in Zimbabwe no longer meets acceptable standards of quality. There is a widespread disregard of media ethics in the country. Many journalists no longer feel professional pride and instead are driven by a desire to make money at the cost of professionalism.

I believe IWPR is a reliable source of information on the situation in Zimbabwe. By producing written analysis, and stories drawing attention to the country's humanitarian crisis, I would also like to believe that we have been able to influence the international community when it has been making some critical decisions on Zimbabwe.

Location: Zimbabwe

Topic: Regime

Focus: Africa

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