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The Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development Newsletter

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Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development ZIMCODD

Investing In People For Social And Economic Justice

FROM THE EDITOR

Angellah Mandoreba

The manner in which public resources are managed or expended determines the course through which national development takes. Discourse surrounding transparency and accountability in the utilisation and expenditure of public resources ruled the roost during ZIMCODD's April to June 2019 programming period with the coalition embarking on massive campaigns and awareness raising activities towards an effective and prudent stewardship of resources. Zimbabwe's current socio-economic challenges have never been due to lack of policies or resources, rather the challenges stem from poor governance of these resources and lack of political will to implement progressive policies which ensure sustainable national development. A number of salient issues were brought forward during the coalition's activities including the need for deterrent measures against the abuse of public resources to ensure that duty bearers are guided by integrity, transparency and accountability in handling public funds. Corruption was singled out as the major hindrance towards national development.

TOWARDS THE ALIGNMENT OF THE PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT ACT TO THE CONSTITUTION

Zimbabwe's public finance management is characterised by corruption, abuse and misappropriation of funds, fiscal leakages, lack of transparency and accountability and continuous violations of legal and constitutional provisions guiding the management of the public funds. Consequently, the country is faced with macroeconomic challenges characterized by huge budget and current account deficits, declining economic growth rate, and unsustainable domestic and external debt.

It is against this background that the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development rolled out massive Public Finance Management Reform Indabas in Hwange, Gweru, Mutare, Bulawayo and Harare to advance the legislative and institutional reforms for PFM in Zimbabwe through increased interaction between members of Parliament, councillors, mayors, government representatives, opinion leaders and civil society. The Indabas gave participants a chance to interrogate the current PFM laws in relation to Chapter 17 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment No. 20 of 2013. The discussions were also informed by the review and need to align the Public Finance Management Act to the Constitution.

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ALIGNMENT OF THE PFM ACT TO THE CONSTITUTION

- The PFM Act must be amended to give citizens enough time to contribute meaningfully to local and national budget formulation processes;
- The PFM Act should incorporate comprehensive PFM principles including prudence, equity, economic use of resources, effectiveness, and being pro- marginalised groups as enshrined in the Constitution of Zimbabwe;
- Section 7 of the PFM Act should be amended to allow the Minister to manage national revenue in consultation with Parliament;
- Section 2 of the PFM Act should be amended to allow for parliamentary approval before writing off loans extended to finance fund accounts;
- Section 14 of the PFM Act should be amended to stop the accounting officer from complying with the Minister's payment directives on costs that are not allowable;
- Section 18 of the PFM Act should be amended to reduce the Minister's powers on the establishment of statutory funds;
- Section 15 of the PFM Act should be amended to compel the Minister to explain, before the relevant Portfolio Committee, his failure to provide annual reports and financial statements on the stipulated due dates;
- The PFM Act should be clear in ensuring that financial reports adhere to the International Public Sector Accounting Standards;
- The PFM Act must provide for punitive and deterrent measures against the abuse of public funds;
- The PFM Act must empower institutions responsible for overseeing public funds management, like the Office of the Auditor General, to have authority to take legal action against those who do not pay heed to their recommendations;
- The PFM Act should incorporate provisions relating to the allocation of not less than five (5) percent of national revenue to provincial and local tiers of government. The obligations of local authorities to submit annual budgets and financial performance reports to the government, Auditor General and the Parliament of Zimbabwe should be clearly articulated in the PFM Act.
- The PFM Act should clearly spell out how access to information by citizens will be strengthened under devolution to ensure that citizens sufficiently carry out their social accountability and oversight role;
- The PFM Act should be deterrent enough to stop the government from borrowing for consumptive instead of productive purposes.

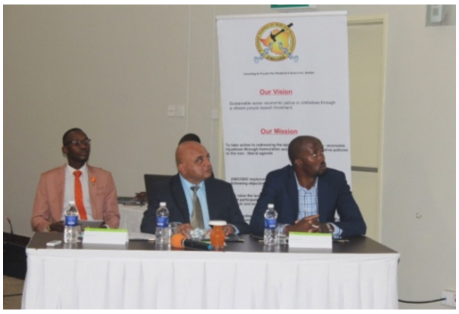

Figure 1: (Centre) Hon Raji Modi attending, Deputy Minister of Industry and Commerce attending a PFM Reform Indaba in Bulawayo

Figure 2: Participants at the PFM Reform Indaba in Harare

THE NEXUS BETWEEN DEVOLUTION AND EFFECTIVE PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

By Tendai Bobo & Nqobizitha Mlambo

There is a strong link between a strong public finance management (PFM) system and the success of a devolved system of government. PFM which is generally defined as the science and art of budgeting, spending and accounting for public funds is the most fundamental element of public sector reform that Zimbabwe needs if it is to succeed economically. PFM not only helps to ensure that there are clearly defined and well applied rules and processes for managing public resources but provides citizens with the information they need to evaluate revenue generation and expenditure. Devolution is usually understood as the assignment of public functions to sub-national governments. The legal framework that guides operations of local government in Zimbabwe include the National Constitution of Zimbabwe; the Public Finance Management Act, Urban Councils Act; Rural District Councils Act; Traditional Leaders Act; and the Provincials Council and Administration Act, Chapter 29:11.

Devolution of governmental powers and resources has always been a contested subject in Zimbabwe. The controversies that surrounded the adoption of devolution hindered efforts to implement it since 2013, when the new Constitution of Zimbabwe was adopted. The incumbent government signaled intentions to implement devolution during the 2018-2023 tenure, with the Minister of Finance and Economic Development (in accordance with the Constitution) already allocating 5% of the National Budget towards facilitating the implementation of devolution. The process and nature of devolution to be implemented remains unclear. While the 2013 Constitution is not a perfect document that entrenches all the necessary aspects of an effective devolution programme, it does provide the starting point towards the establishment of a decentralized government.

What is required in particular is for national officials (both political and administrative) to commit to the devolution process that respects the rule of law. Importantly, if devolution is to succeed it should be a nationally shared objective supported by both those with and without power. Devolution should be seen as a necessary vehicle towards a deepening democracy, locally driven development, improved public service delivery and national cohesion. Furthermore, devolution provides a ray of hope for the people in areas like Hwange with high prevalence of poverty in Zimbabwe. Nevertheless, devolution is not a panacea to inequality, poverty and poor corporate governance if it does not bring about empowerment, participation and inclusion by the governed. The chicken and egg relationship between public finance management and devolution calls upon the rights holders and duty bearers to have multi-stakeholder engagements on what they deem fit for their particular area.

Cognisant of the high level of corruption in Zimbabwe's government departments, as annually reported by the Office of the Auditor General, misuse of public resources is widespread as these departments perennially fail to account for the resources allocated to them. Thus, the knitted corruption in Zimbabwe, if not addressed, will be a headwind against the implementation of devolution. Political will to fight corruption therefore remains critical for devolution to bear fruits.

For devolution to bear results in Zimbabwe, there is need for an effective PFM system anchored on transparency and accountability. The elements of sub national PFM, including basic accounting and reporting, cash management, procurement, debt management, internal control and audit and external audit and performance evaluation immediately become the center of discussion. PFM reforms are thus essential for the desired outcomes of devolution because the reforms ensure managerial efficiency, transparency and accountability by the government departments. Autonomy for the local authorities remains critical. Unlike the South African Constitution (1996) and the Kenyan Constitution (2010), the Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013) is not clear on the powers and functions of local government. Therefore, there is need for a Constitutional amendment to ensure that the autonomy and powers of sub national governments are well spelt out. However, political will remains key in the implementation of devolution.

The PFM Reform Indabas conducted by ZIMCODD exhibited a growing citizens' appetite for open access to local government information. This includes not only on how local authorities generate and spend their own resources, but also on how they have used funds transferred from central government. Such information will allow citizens to determine the extent to which local authorities' development plans and annual budgets are implemented and to enhance accountability. These are some of the issues that the new PFM Act should address towards a successful implementation of devolution.

Citizen agency in Zimbabwe on effective PFM and devolution system is gathering momentum and through the PFM Reform Indabas, ZIMCODD is providing a platform for citizens to voice their concerns and aspirations as the country is bracing towards devolution.

ACTORS AND STAKEHOLDERS

In recent years, an interest in "people's participation" or community engagement for the promotion of transparency and accountability in the extractive sector has increased. Trust in traditional government institutions and also in the representative democracies' legitimacy has been on the decline. Subsequently, there has been an unrelenting interest in alternative governance forms.

Multi-stakeholder governance is a process of decision making amongst equals rather than a consultation process in which one influential stakeholder leads. Members of the executives, legislature, judiciary, bureaucracy, non-governmental organisations, academics, activist, researchers and citizens among others should participate in natural resource governance. It is widely argued that through inclusion of diverse actors and stakeholders; transparency and accountability can be fostered.

The actors are not only involved in decision making and implementation but are also involved in sharing expertise, ideas and interests. The new collaborative models emphasize the significance of incorporating multiple actors as well as establishing local institutions, which include local communities in decision-making with regards to the access and governance of natural resources.

The restricted capabilities of the disadvantaged and powerless mining communities' members to participate in decision-making are a formidable challenge to collaborative governance models, since they are deprived socially and exploited and dependent on the elite groups in most cases.

Currently multi-stakeholder initiatives (partnerships between the government, private sector, civil society, community and other stakeholders) are increasingly being promoted by bilateral, multilateral as well as nongovernmental organisations to address weaknesses in natural resources governance. Multi-stakeholder approaches give citizens, through representation by the civil society, a closer access to the state agencies as well as extractive companies.

TOBACCO FARMING: A CURSE OR A BLESSING FOR CHIHOTA FARMERS?

By Ellen Chipunza

Figure 3: Farmers taking tobacco to barns for curing

With the 2018 – 19 tobacco selling season in progress it is imperative to ask whether growing tobacco has been worth it in monetary and environmental terms or not for most farmers. In a visit to rural Chihota (land of my ancestors) one cannot fail to notice the massive deforestation that has affected the area as a result of tobacco farming. Popularly known as the golden leaf in Zimbabwe most farmers have resorted to growing tobacco instead of the traditional crops that is maize and ground nuts. Growth in the number of tobacco farmers has been immense since the country's land reform programme.

Most farmers in the area have vested their efforts in growing flue-cured tobacco which requires a drying process (called curing) in specialised barns. While the use of the recently introduced solar powered tobacco curing fans would be ideal for the process, "new" farmers are not however able to afford these and so they use firewood instead which means a lot of tree cutting. Looking around the Chihota area shows that massive deforestation is underway due to the felling of trees regrettably not accompanied by sufficient reforestation. Maize cobs (maguri) have taken centre stage as they are now being used as a substitute for firewood in preparing meals for families. Deforestation in the area has left many vulnerable women and girls having to walk for long distances in search of firewood thereby burdening an already burdened group fighting the economic ills that most of the Zimbabwean rural populace are faced with.

Whilst tobacco is seen as a lucrative crop this has not been the case for this year's farming season. The season has been characterised by low tobacco prices with the crop selling at an average price of less than USD$2 per kg at the opening of the selling season in April 2019. The situation has been further compounded by government reneging on its promise of making payment of United States dollars into farmers' nostro accounts. Instead farmers have been told they will be paid 100% in Bond Note or RTGS$ which is an unwelcome move considering Zimbabwe's hyperinflation environment. This has seen farmers from the area engaging in a "mini strike" with some farmers vowing to keep their crop but with limited market options they ultimately end up selling the crucial crop at very low and unfair prices. This development could leave many unable to afford inputs for the coming season, or failing to pay their debts a situation in which most contract farmers will likely find themselves in.

The tobacco farmers have not only comprised their livelihoods by growing the crop considering that they are also contributing to climate change through deforestation but this seems to be the least of their worries. Like any Zimbabwean trying to eke out a living they are more worried about getting fair returns for their labour in growing the golden leaf and the damage to the environment is the least of their worries. Future generations will have to face the consequences of the current generation's actions as trees continue to fall in order to process the tobacco crop. The question then remains, at what cost to the environment and at what benefit for the farmer?

CRITICAL COMPONENTS FOR A TRANSPARENT, ACCOUNTABLE AND INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE IN THE EXTRACTIVES SECTOR

By Muchanyara Midzi

Figure 4: Some of the precious minerals extracted in Zimbabwe

It is critical to disaggregate and deconstruct governance into its operational constituents especially in the extractive sector.

Institutions

The institutional role in promoting transparent, accountable and inclusive governance has received more attention lately. Decision making in natural resource governance is often a complex process which differs with the resource in question. Institutions are core determinants of transparency, accountability and inclusivity in governance for promoting socioeconomic development. Nations with quality institutions have a higher capability of managing revenues from natural resources transparently, accountably and inclusively. One of the fundamental ways in which the capacity of institutions can influence socioeconomic transformation is through resource allocation. Conversely, poor institutional capacity results in misallocation of resources through inefficient natural resource investment choices by the private and public sectors resulting in poor socioeconomic outcomes.

In order to enhance transparency, accountability and inclusivity, it is fundamental to put functional institutions in place. Empirical evidence has shown that whilst the remarkable socioeconomic development of the East Asian Tigers is attributed to transparency, accountability and stakeholder inclusion fostered by strong and quality institutions most African institutions are defective and weak due to lack of rule of law, mismanagement, corruption, political interference and lack of robust stakeholder consultations. Functional institutions remain critical to address lack of transparency, accountability and inclusiveness in Africa's mining industry.

Policy

Policy denotes a purposeful and decisive course of action taken by multi-actors to address certain issues and to advance specified objectives. In most developing nations, natural resources are controlled by the state, and they are under the influence of public policy, which can be understood as the totality of government action or inaction thereof. To enhance transparency, accountability and inclusivity there is need for implementation of a stable and consistent policy. However, it is the onus of any government to make sure that the policy is effectively implemented, constantly adapted to the dynamic environment, persistently fulfilling the needs, expectations and demands of its people. The goals of policy cannot be attained if the subsisting policy is not constantly evaluated and analysed.

In the absence of good governance practises and sound policy framework with effective implementation mechanisms, resource rents may spur gluttonous rent-seeking behaviour- 'the voracity effect'. Mineral wealth actuates the rise of national governments, which are less accountable and transparent to the citizens, have little and /or no concern to enhance institutional capacity and effective policy implementation to bolster sustainable socioeconomic development. Promoting a shared responsibility for the sustainable management of natural resource is an integral policy option. Ideally, formal policy frameworks should stem from a common national vision and provide direction and guidance for sound natural resources governance. Natural resource governance policy framework should be a product of a participatory process, internally driven and generates a broad-based ownership and commitment, anchored on the nation's development vision, the environment and the society. Policy frameworks, which support co-management of natural resources address issues of accountable and transparent institutions, ecological stability, livelihoods, equity and social justice in the economic and political arena.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF REDWING MINE CLOSURE IN PENHALONGA

By Lloyd Sesemani

Figure 5: Artisanal miners in Penhalonga, Manicaland

Since the closure of Redwing mine in Penhalonga, there has been an increase in the number of people venturing into artisanal gold mining. Redwing mine was the backbone for many families' means of survival and its closure left many jobless. Former employees who are courageous enough are now resorting to risky illegal mining activities in mine shafts with one life having been recently lost in the shaft.

The mine closure has seen a rise in poverty, crime as well as moral decay in the Penhalonga community. High crime rate and moral decadence is largely attributed to the mushrooming number of school drop outs as a result of economic hardships that have seen most families failing to send their children to school. Social services delivery is also now in a dire state with no proper sanitation and families are now fetching water from unprotected sources. Livestock is being lost due to the unrehabilitated environment.

There is need for the government of Zimbabwe to address the issues of Redwing mine which closes and reopens anytime. According to one mine worker, the mine closed as it failed to meet operational costs. There is also need for urgent attention to the worrisome problems the former mine workers are facing and most of them do not even know when they are going to get the remuneration packages owed to them.

POVERTY IN A SEA OF PLENTY: THE CASE OF MANICALAND PROVINCE

Zimbabwe's natural and mineral resource endowment is undoubtedly sufficient to resolve and address the socio-economic crises affecting the majority of the citizens. Manicaland Province is one of the mineral rich provinces being endowed with eighteen valuable minerals. From diamond and gold to timber in the province, the people of Manicaland in particular and Zimbabweans in general should be leading decent and happy lives derived from the natural resources. What then is the cause of misery and suffering in a sea of plenty? Is it a case of bad stewardship or that of mining laws and policies that prioritise large scale mining conglomerates at the expense of locals? These are some of the questions asked at the Manicaland Provincial Alternative Mining Indaba (PAMI) held in the resource rich province from 11-12 June2019, convened by the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD), in conjunction with the Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA) and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC). Participants from mining areas in the province expressed great dismay at the manner in which the mineral wealth in their area is being exploited by companies like the Zimbabwe Consolidated Diamond Company (ZCDC) without meaningful benefit to the locals.

Manicaland province is confronted by a myriad of socio-economic challenges ranging from perennial youth unemployment, de-industrialisation, bad and inadequate infrastructure, underdevelopment, poor social service delivery and ecological debt. Development practitioners the world over talk of the “resource curse” while others like Andre-Gunder Frank talk of the unequal economic relationship that exists between the global north and south that perpetuates economic inequality and misery as a result of the extractive centre-periphery relationship. The centre-periphery relationship entails a scenario whereby multinational mining conglomerates based in the global north exploit mineral and natural resources from periphery countries like Zimbabwe without value addition and a deliberate policy to create decent employment and economic development for the resource rich countries. Such is the case in Manicaland.

Redwing Mine in Manicaland among others operate without any meaningful socio-economic development translated into the host community. Participants from Penhalonga bemoaned lack of clear policy strategies on the part of both government and Redwing Mine which has been mining gold since 1884, to craft policies that empower the Tsvingwe community in form of decent jobs and wages as well as the establishment of factories that can value-add to the gold through jewellery making. Penhalonga community members continue to cry foul at the serious levels of pollution in a major water sources especially the Mutare river being polluted by both large- and small-scale miners. This have negatively affected the locals' livelihood activities. it was also highlighted that a Russian gold mining company illegally engaging in riverbed gold mining violating environmental regulations and also compromising the natural ecosystem. Such is also the case with the Chiadzwa community where different diamond companies have been mining the precious stone for the past decade but there are no diamond polishing and cutting companies that have been established in Chiadzwa to open employment opportunities for the host community.

It is a serious cause for concern that both Artisanal Small-Scale Miners (ASMs) and large-scale miners are all contributing to the ecological debt that comes with unsustainable mining activities. ASMs and larger scale miners in Penhalonga are failing to take environmental rehabilitation initiatives to fill up pits and holes dug during the mining processes. The blasting taking at diamond mines in Chiadzwa are causing air pollution exposing communities to terrible respiratory diseases. Such levels of irresponsible pollution are in violation of Section 73 of the Zimbabwean Constitution which states that every person has the right to an environment not harmful to health and well-being. Chinese mining companies as stipulated in the Environmental Management Act mining companies must ensure that they fill up open shafts and engage in reforestation through tree planting but nothing of this sought has been done in Chiadzwa.

Participants at the PAMI exhibited dedication to carrying on with the social struggle towards sustainable mining to ensure community beneficiation. They therefore called upon the government to ensure responsible investment in the mining sector as well as mechanising small scale miners in the gold and diamond sectors.

ROUNDTABLE FOR THE ELECTORATE AND THE ELECTED IN MUTASA SOUTH CONSTITUENCY

By Angellah Mandoreba

Engagement, dialogue and responsiveness from duty bearers are critical components for effective governance from local to national level. This was emphasised by the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development Programmes Manager, Mr John Maketo, at the Mutasa South Constituency Indaba on 25 June 2019. The Indaba which is a node in a series of quarterly constituency indabas was born out of ZIMCODD's realisation that there exists a widening gap between the electorate and the elected. To bridge this gap the coalition convened an Indaba in Mutasa South Constituency to facilitate dialogue between residents and duty bearers inclusive of the Member of Parliament (MP), Mutare City Mayor and Ward Councillors. The platform brought together all and sundry despite their political and other differences.

The Mutasa South Constituency Indaba put the following key issues on the agenda for dialogue with their leadership:

Public resource management in relation to the following:
- Mineral revenue transparency
- Health service delivery
- Infrastructure development (road network maintenance)
- Education service delivery
- Transparency and accountability in the use of local funds

One of the participants testified that it was her first time to meet the Member of Parliament for her area since he was elected into office. "Nhasi ndafara nezvataitirwa neveZIMCODD, nekuti ini ndiko kekutanga kusangana naMP wangu" (I am happy with the opportunity afforded to us by ZIMCODD, for me this is my first time to meet my MP), charged the participant. The comment is just a clear testimony of how duty bearers at local level are sometimes alien to the people they represent. Just like in any other parts of Africa, most leaders interface with the people during the elections campaign period thereafter they go into political hibernation. The constituency indabas are therefore coming at an opportune time when citizens' hunger for platforms to interface with their leaders to jointly couch contextualised development solutions for their specific communities.

It is ZIMCODD's belief that, together, rights holders (citizens) and duty bearers can proffer solutions to challenges bedevilling their respective communities but that is only possible if the two interface and embrace dialogue. Mutasa South Constituency Indaba brought to light the socioeconomic challenges in the area with special focus on Public Finance Management. Mutasa South is confronted with a number of challenges including poor and inadequate health facilities, congested schools, poor road networks which are affecting livelihoods, poor water and sanitation, exorbitant rates charged by the Mutare City Council and irresponsible mining activities among others. This provided an opportunity for the respective authorities to share with citizens the current and future plans to address these issues. Having realised the government incapacitation to improve education services, the Mutare City Council introduced the Education levy of $1 towards building schools in the area. The Indaba also established that there is deliberate disinformation by council authorities regarding financial information. The meeting was informed that many councils do not have audit reports and this hinders efforts towards ensuring accountability and transparency, therefore the Indaba resolved that the Public Finance Management Act should compel councils to produce and avail financial statements to give room for the public to hold authorities accountable. To enhance literacy among the participants, Mutasa South residents were urged to explore available social media platforms and get informed on economic governance issues. The current power cuts in the country were also linked to the debt question and citizens were made aware of the country's failure to settle the over US$80 million owed to South Africa's Eskom and Mozambique's Hydro Cahora Bassa.

Discord between the Member of Parliament and the Mutare City Council was singled out by ward councillors as one of the major hindrances of development in the constituency and from the discussions, the MP and the Mutare City Council have never met to discuss developmental issues in the area. The Indaba called for proper coordination between the two authorities to ensure progress. Above all, residents were encouraged to set aside their political differences since constituency development issues affect all despite one's political affiliations.

Figure 6: Corner far left , Hon Regai Tsunga (MP, Mutasa South Constituency) follow proceedings at the Constituency Indaba in Mutasa South

Figure 7: First row; youth follow proceedings at the Mutasa South Constituency Indaba

SOCIOECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE MONETARY POLICY MEASURES – STATUTORY INSTRUMENT (SI) 142/2019

On 24 June 2019, the government abolished the 10-year-old multi-currency regime in the country making the Zimbabwe dollar the sole legal tender. The Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) bemoans the apparent policy inconsistency and premature knee jerk reaction. The need for a local sovereign currency is not disputed, however the government acted against stakeholder expectations of conducting wider consultations with the citizens of Zimbabwe who are the most affected by the abrupt policy pronouncement in line with section 13 (2) of the Constitution which requires Government to involve the people.

in the formulation and implementation of development plans and programmes that affect them and ensuring that key fundamentals are in place before the introduction of the sovereign currency.

While the adoption of a local currency is one of the several steps that have to be taken in achieving economic recovery, there is need to address the root causes of the current currency crisis which are rampant corruption, mismanagement of public finances and impunity being enjoyed by those that are fuelling the crisis through arbitrage and resource haemorrhage. The untimely adoption of the Zim Dollar will only make the general populace who are the workers both in the formal and informal sector suffer more from the market reactions to SI142/2019. In the absence of key fundamentals such as productivity; high levels of capacity utilization; healthy capital account; addressing confidence deficit and trade surplus, ZIMCODD is concerned about the inevitable manifestation of the following implications:

- Challenges for companies and retailers to restock.
The sudden policy pronouncement is likely to affect companies (including retailers of basic commodities) whose current inventory was acquired in US$ currency. The ripple effect of this implication might lead to empty shelves pushing prices upwards and massive job cuts as companies try to manage their operating costs.

- Measures announced include the intended sterilisation of $1.2 billion in RTGS funds.
ZIMCODD is seriously concerned that sterilisation will result in additional debt for the country and worse still in foreign currency. The RTGS$ Debt to GDP ratio will thus go above 100%, which means our capacity to service the debt will be significantly low. Given the high leverage, the ability to attract lines of credit will equally be low. This is the second time government assumed private sector debt under 10 years. Payable interest on the due amounts will further burden the fiscus.

TOWARDS EFFECTIVE LOCAL GOVERNANCE...

ZIMCODD calls for political will to address weak internal controls, poor corporate governance, procurement irregularities, and inadequate controls in receipting payments and meeting statutory obligations and deadlines for financial reporting which are recurrent in the successive Auditor General's reports. Without political will to implement punitive measures on errant local and central government officials, the inherent benefits associated with devolution will remain theoretical. The first step therefore will be to enforce the implementation of Section 299(1) of the Constitution regarding the role of parliament to monitor and oversee provincial and metropolitan councils as well as local authorities through the alignment of the Public Finance Management Act to the Constitution and the promulgation of an Act of Parliament to operationalize devolution. The proposed Act of Parliament should be clear on the obligation of sub-national governments to submit annual budgets and financial performance reports to government, Auditor General and Parliament of Zimbabwe. Such provisions should also incorporate provisions that establish institutional and administrative frameworks that are used by parliament in monitoring and overseeing state revenues and expenditure.

AS THE STRUGGLE TOWARDS PRO-POOR AGRICULTURAL POLICIES CONTINUES...

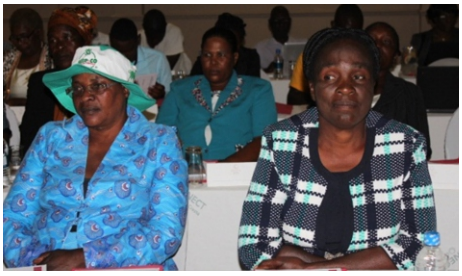

Figure 8: Women smallholder farmers follow proceedings at the National Policy Dialogue Meeting on the Agricultural Policy Direction

Despite the major shifts in climatic conditions, agriculture remains the backbone of the Zimbabwean economy with the sector being mostly rain-fed. The majority of the rural populace in the country derive their livelihoods from agriculture and other related rural economic activities. It is against this background that the government introduced initiatives including the Command Agriculture Scheme of 2016, which is a government programme designed to promote food security through domestic agricultural production. Nevertheless, the initiative has been received with mixed feelings by different sectors of the Zimbabwean community.

In pursuit of Vision 2030, the government embraced the neo-liberal economic ideology underpinned by austerity measures which have since come into effect through the Transitional Stabilisation Programme (TSP), the 2019 National Budget and the Monetary Policy Statement.

The TSP is driven by liberalisation strategies aimed at economic growth rather than sustainable development and this has serious implications on agriculture. It is against this background that the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) convened the National Policy Dialogue Meeting on the Agricultural Policy Direction under the Economy in Transition Series on 25 April 2019 to advocate for pro-poor agricultural policies through dialogue between policy makers and rural women smallholder farmers. Amongst the policy makers were representatives from the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Lands, Agriculture, Water, Climate and Rural Settlement; Budget, Finance and Economic Development; Local Government, Urban and Rural Development; and Gender and Development; Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development; Grain Marketing Board; Agricultural Marketing Authority and Agricultural Technical Extension Officers.

The meeting came at the most relevant time when women smallholder farmers need to know the future of the agriculture sector so that they are well positioned to be able to stand and defend their livelihoods amid the promotion of private players in the agricultural sector.

ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE: TAKING WOMEN AND YOUTH ON BOARD

By Angellah Mandoreba and Tinashe Madondo

Figure 9: Women at the Economic Literacy Seminar in Seke pose for a group photo

Figure 10: Participants at the Economic Literacy Seminar discussing social and economic rights in groups

Zimbabwe is currently grappling with high levels of macro-economic challenges ranging from low industrial capacity utilisation, high unemployment rate, current account deficits, huge public debt and high inflation rate. All these ills are largely attributed to poor economic governance exacerbated by rampant institutionalised corruption.

National economic governance issues have remained sacred to the better part of the society with women and youth being the most affected. It is against this background that the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development embarked on a massive empowerment programme for women and youth through conducting Economic Literacy Seminars in Kwekwe, rural Goromonzi and Seke to increase the knowledge of citizens through capacity building, knowledge transfer and information dissemination.

The seminars are part of the coalitions' overall objective of strengthening transparency and accountability in public resource management through empowering citizens so that they play an oversight role and participate in economic governance.

Feminists believe that development means, the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services in the most equitable manner possible, with maximum participation of all people. In the same spirit, the seminars aimed to strengthen citizen participation in economic governance by improving the economic literacy of previously marginalised social groups (women and youth) through civic education.

Participation by all citizens in economic governance matters largely contribute to inclusive development. Participants were conscientised of the constitutional provisions on relating to Public Finance Management (PFM), responsibilities of duty bearers regarding PFM and the duty of citizens in ensuring transparency and accountability in the use of public finance through social accountability strategies. Furthermore, knowledge on citizens' social and economic rights and tax justice issues was shared.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS FIRST

By Jussa Kudherezera (Social and Economic Justice Activist-SEJA)

The Marange Youth Assembly joined other progressive organisations to commemorate the Day of African Child belatedly on the 27th of June 2019. The event was co-hosted by the Ministry of Youth, Sport, Arts and Recreation and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) with support from many local organizations dealing with children and youth issues. Junior Members of Parliament and councillors from Mutare District were the main draw card. The Day of the African Child was running under the theme: "Humanitarian Action in Africa: Children's Rights First." The theme is the brain child of the African Union in remembrance of the 1976 Soweto massacre of school children who were demonstrating for their right to be taught in their languages. The theme is a stark reminder of the conditions under which the African child is living under and the speakers were passionate about issues affecting children and youth in the district.

Child representatives urged duty bearers and other relevant stakeholders to invest in social services especially education, health, agriculture and climate change mitigatory measures since climate change induced poverty is at peak leaving the African child vulnerable. There is need for improvement on the resilience of the African child so that he/she can face the generational challenges. The speakers were unanimous in their demands for children's improved access to health and hygiene, education, safety and security, peace and justice, safe and clean environment.

Early marriages came under the spotlight as well taking into consideration that Mutare West is one of the outposts famous with child marriages. This practice, the fired up young speakers declared must stop forth with and those practising it for whatever reason religious or cultural must be jailed. As an organisation focusing on active youth participation in social, economic and political spaces and climate change/environment, MAYA appreciate the positive policies that the government of Zimbabwe has adopted especially, Section 19 and 20 of the Constitution espousing the protection of youth and children. MAYA strive to work and empower the African child holistically to become responsible citizens in their areas of endeavour and take Africa to greater heights.

Africa still will rise!

Figure 11: School children from Mt Makomwe High School entertain guests during the Day of the African Child commemorations

Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development
ZIMCODD

Investing In People For Social And Economic Justice

5 Orkney Road, Eastlea, Harare
Email: zimcodd@zimcodd.co.zw
Tel/Fax: +263-242-776830
Website: www.zimcodd.org
Facebook: Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development
Facebook Account: Zimcodd Zimcodd
Twitter @ zimcodd1