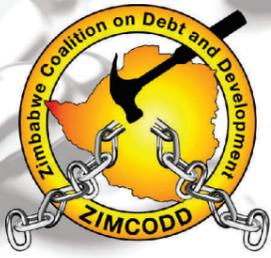


BREAKFREE



The Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development Newsletter

www.zimcodd.org

2015 3rd edition

Investing in people for social and economic justice in Zimbabwe



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THE INVESTOR I WANT CAMPAIGN

The Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) launched "The investor I want campaign" in Mutare on 26 November 2015. The "investor I want campaign" is an advocacy initiative aimed at fostering a culture of participation and citizen voices inclusion in natural resources governance for the realization of social and economic rights. The campaign is borne out of the realization that despite several pronouncements around foreign investment mainly from China and Russia, tangible gains remain to be seen by the ordinary citizen. International human rights standards have traditionally been the responsibility of governments, but with the increased role of corporate actors in human and economic development nationally and internationally, the issue of business' impact on the enjoyment of human rights has

been placed on the agenda of the United Nations through the UN "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework on human rights and business. The process of globalization and other global developments over the past decades have seen non-state actors such as transnational corporations and other businesses play an increasingly important role in developmental issues such as employment and its link to economic wellbeing, environmental debate, infrastructure development, health, education and social services development among others. It is against this background The investor I want campaign is premised upon. Citizens' involvement is key for example multinational companies contracts in the extractives should be made public to communities for their input. ZIMCODD has started collecting citizens voices on the

kind of investor they want in their communities, these will be shared with various stakeholders such as the business community, local leadership and government arms to contribute towards up scaling community concerns and expectations for participation in the economic governance space. Lack of citizens voices has resulted in most communities being shortchanged of their natural resources, such as the case of mining communities. The recently internationally adopted 2015-2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) clearly spell out the development agenda for the next fifteen years globally. But for this to work, the role of business in the 2030 Agenda has to be about much more than a scaled up version of philanthropy and clever solutions. It has to be about the very rules of the game for how

business is done in the first place. The vanguard of corporate leaders committed to responsible business must grow. Corporate accountability to communities needs a shift from the current top-down approach to one that solicits and integrates citizens input through the various consultative methods that could be undertaken. The Investor I want campaign is a platform for engagement and exchange of information for sustainable development. Communities will clearly spell out their expectations regarding investor conduct and the form of resources governance they want for the enjoyment of their social and economic rights whilst government and business will also have a chance to present their plans for common and shared understanding thus minimizing conflict but rather foster mutual cooperation.

THE INVESTOR I WANT...

A good investor should:

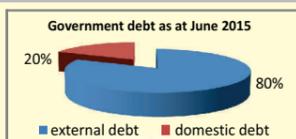
- * Honour Tax Obligations
- * Be Sensitive to the Environment
- * Be Sensitive to Community needs and requirements
- * Include local Communities in its supply chain
- * Be Committed to Corporate Social Responsibility
- * Observe local, Regional and International Principles on Business and Human Rights



FACTS ON ZIMBABWE'S DEBT PROFILE

Total debt Public and publicly guaranteed debts as at June 2015

- Total debt: US\$8.4 Billion
- External debt: US\$6.7 billion
- Domestic debt: US\$1.7 billion
- Debt to GDP ratio: 59.1%
- 80% of the total debt is external
- 20% of the total debt is domestic debt



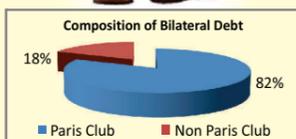
Cost of debt on individual citizen

- Considering the national total debt, each individual has a burden of about \$643;
- On external debt, each individual has a burden of about \$512; and
- About \$130 on domestic debt.

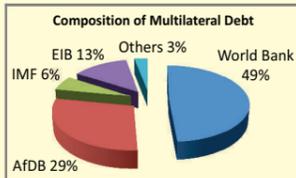


Structure of External debt: US\$6.7 billion

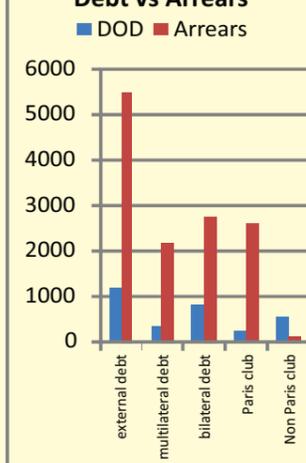
- Out of the US\$6.7 billion external debt, US\$3.545 billion are bilateral loans and US\$2.571 billion are multilateral loans.



Paris Club Permanent members: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, the Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.



Debt vs Arrears



DOD versus Arrears

- Zimbabwe borrowed US\$1,174 billion externally and US\$5,528 arrears have accumulated.
- Out of the US\$1,174 billion, US\$5,528 is arrears.

- Multilateral Disbursed and Outstanding Debt (DOD) is US\$372 million and US\$2,199 arrears have accumulated making a total of US\$2,571 billion.
- Total Bilateral DOD is US\$802 million and US\$2,743 in arrears has accumulated making a total of US\$3,545 billion bilateral debt.
- Paris Club DOD is US\$229 million and US\$2,607 billion in arrears has accumulated making Paris Club debt US\$2,836 billion.
- Non-Paris Club DOD is US\$574 million and US\$135 million in arrears has accumulated making Paris Club debt US\$2,836 billion.

ZIMCODD position

- There is need for the government to commission a public debt audit to establish how much is owed, the purpose and condition under which loans were given, disbursement methods, whether objectives were met, charges other than interest and benefits and if any

- benefits accrued to citizens.
- Illegitimate and odious debts should be unconditionally cancelled.
- Government should stop assuming debts of parastatals and should limit guarantees on these debts.
- The government is encouraged to continue to lead in the process of resolving the debt crisis instead of allowing the external players to dictate the debt resolution strategies.
- Debt management strategies to be implemented should not infringe on social and economic justice. The government should

- strike a balance between debt repayments and social sector spending.
- ZIMCODD advocates for responsible lending from the creditors.
- The government should focus on domestic resources mobilisation and minimise external borrowing. This calls for plugging leakages in the public finance management system.
- In the event that government is contracting loans, it should acquire grants and more concessional loans which are cheaper.

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Car Rally Against Prepaid Water Meters Held In Bulawayo



Bulawayo car rally against prepaid water meters

The car rally against the installation of pre-paid water meters was held in Bulawayo on the 28th of August 2015, the event was organised by the Bulawayo Water Taskforce. In 2013, the Bulawayo City Council (BCC) made a resolution to introduce prepaid water meters as a water management system in the city, and other parts of the country such as City of Harare have since followed suit, a move that has been opposed by residents who have pointed out that pre-paid water meters compromise their constitutional right to water. During the events cars were

branded with anti-prepaid advocacy messages such as “Water is Life”, “Prepaid water meters will punish the poor” and “Water is a right” ZIMCODD joined other stakeholders in the protests and the car rally was attended by various residents associations and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) that are members of the Bulawayo Water Taskforce. The taskforce comprises of Abameli Human Rights Network, Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economy Associations (ZCIEA), National Youth and Development Trust (NYDT), Zimbabwe Congress of Trade

Unions (ZCTU), WILD, Ibhetshu Lika Zulu, Bulawayo Progressive Residents Association (BPRA), Public Policy Research Institute of Zimbabwe (PPRIZ) and Youth Buya. The car rally raised awareness to residents and City authorities about the negative effects of prepaid water meters. The rally started by a tour of the CBD before heading towards the western suburbs. These included Mzilikazi, Makokoba, Entumbane, Emakhandeni, Cowdray Park, Luveve, Magwegwe, Pumula, Nkulumane, Nketa and Mabuthweni. During the

course of the car rally most of the residents were in full support of the fight against prepaid water meters. One resident, MaBanda from Entumbane said “prepaid water meters are not the solution to the water crisis in Bulawayo but the council must build more dams and improve their water distribution and billing system”. Another resident, Welcome Dondo from Luveve quizzed on “how are people going to substitute water, in the event that one is not economically capable to buy water? We cannot budget water, this has serious health implications”.

The residents collectively rejected the introduction of prepaid water meters in Bulawayo and promised to resist the intended move by all means possible. The car rally was followed by ward meetings, as shown, all leading up to the BIG ONE which was the “Mothers of all Marches” dubbed to be the largest in Bulawayo civic society history.

RIGHT TO WATER

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Constituency Meetings Schedule		
Date	Venue	Time
29/08/2015	Njube Hall	1400 hours
29/08/2015	Nkulumane Hall	1400 hours
30/08/2015	Entumbane Hall	1400 hours
30/08/2015	Luveve Beit Hall	1000 hours
30/08/2015	Tshabalala Hall	1400 hours
30/08/2015	Nketa Hall	1400 hours
30/08/2015	Pumula Old Hall	1400 hours
30/08/2015	Magwegwe Hall	1000 hours
30/08/2015	Mzilikazi McDonald Hall	1400 hours
30/08/2015	Mabuthweni Hall	1000 hours

WATER IS A HUMAN RIGHT

NO

To Prepaid Water Meters

WATER IS LIFE...

Constituency/ Ward meetings schedule

The March In Pictures



The Anti-Prepaid Water Meter March

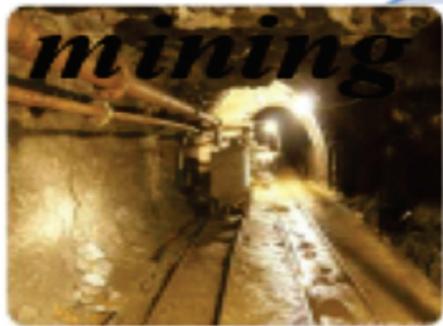
On Friday the 4th September 2015 over 2000 Bulawayo residents from all walks of life, residents organisations and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) took part in the march demonstrating over the non-rescinding stance by Bulawayo City Council (BCC) to introduce prepaid water meters. The march was a success despite the chilly weather on that day. It started from City Hall car park and climaxed at Stanley Square Makokoba where various CSOs and other stakeholders addressed the public. The residents

called on the BCC to rescind its decision to install pre-paid water meters. ZIMCODD and other CSOs reiterated that the move would be a violation of the constitutional right to water as enshrined in Chapter 4: Section 77(a) of the constitution. Furthermore prepaid water meters would only bring suffering to the people, particularly the poor. Abameli Human Rights Network said that “they will take the BCC to court” if the prepaid water meters are installed. Various stakeholders took to the podium with a similar

message that it is unconstitutional, anti-poor, unrealistic, and that water cannot be substituted. The residents who were interviewed at the march rejected the installation of prepaid water meters in Bulawayo and other parts of the country. Mbonisi Nyoni lamented that “water has no substitute unlike ZESA. Electricity can be substituted with gas, paraffin and solar but for water you cannot”. Nomagugu G. Sibanda said that “prepaid water meters are simply a money making move by the City Council”.



The Ideal Sustainable Social Protection Programme



BASIC INCOME GRANT

Everything starts with a desire for a better life and a better world, a principle which seems to have been long forgotten by policy makers in Zimbabwe. All over the world, neo-liberal and capitalist propositions for economic development have brought huge inequalities. In 2015, two thirds of the world's 7 billion population live in poverty stricken countries of Africa, Latin America and Asia. The world economic inequalities have been replicated in individual countries on these continents. At the time of attainment of independence in 1980, Zimbabwe inherited a dual and highly unequal society with more than 70% of the population living in poverty stricken rural or peripheral urban regions. The deplorable Social Services status in Zimbabwe capture the essential context for the design of broad based

and people centred public policies to improve the welfare of the population. As enshrined in Article 22 and 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 as well as in the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment No. 20 of 2013, Social Protection is a vital element in these sections, especially with regards to the rights of women, children, the elderly and other vulnerable or special interest groups. However, social spending places a huge demand on public resources in terms of development of infrastructure and maintenance. At independence, the Government of Zimbabwe embarked on strong social development programs. These were mostly carried out in collaboration with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Many schools and health centres

were established in remote marginalized rural communities and in newly developing community settlements in and around major urban centres. During this period the Government

facilities. With the onset of the 21st century, the Government of Zimbabwe has experienced serious challenges in terms of fiscal resources. This has largely been a result of market

Government of Zimbabwe, in conjunction with NGOs, has conducted pilot programmes such as the 2011 Harmonised Social Cash Transfer (HSCT) programme. HSCT is a poverty alleviation programme targeted at peripheral rural and urban areas. This programme was able to strengthen the purchasing power of marginalized and most vulnerable households. It was able to improve their socio-economic status given the prevailing economic conditions. Development thrives on resources thus a successful social development programme in Zimbabwe needs resources. There is need for the Government to establish viability and transparency in the country's natural resource utilisation especially the mining sector, in order to support social

development grants that cover basic human necessities. Making use of different programmes, like the Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), the Government is able to introduce a Basic Income Grant (BIG), just like it has been doing with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Community Share Ownership Trust (CSOT). The Basic Income Grant has been successfully implemented in South Africa, Namibia, Malawi and India to provide marginalized societies with cash grants so that families are able to support their basic requirements such as food, school and basic health care access. The BIG has been credited for promoting dignified human life it is a viable element in developing Social Protection policy that helps reduce or end poverty in a sustainable way.



spent large amounts of public resources to enhance the population's access to social welfare services. However, evidence depicts a decline in government investment towards social welfare

reforms introduced since the late 1990s. Looking into the future, the Government urgently needs resources to direct spending towards social development programs. Over the years the

CNRG questioned the granting of mine concessions, which are shrouded in secrecy, and also pointed out that the state mining company, Zimbabwe Mining Development Corporation (ZMDC), is not being managed responsibly. The heavy political involvement in the mining sector limits accountability resulting in fewer checks and balances in the industry compared to other more competitive sectors. Lack of information regarding the mining value chain is also a factor inhibiting transparency and accountability in Zimbabwe's extractive sector. This secrecy culture means that communities and the civil society cannot hold

mining companies accountable as they do not know whether or not they were fulfilling their contractual and statutory obligations, added CNRG. The environment has not been spared and environmental degradation has affected most mining communities with trees being cut down and gullies formed. CNRG proposed that the government has to adopt a new progressive and inclusive law that addresses its contemporary needs and implement best mining practices, plucking a leaf from countries such as Botswana and Norway whose economic status is stable as a result of their well-formulated policies.

Resource

“curse”

- a real phenomenon in Zimbabwe

The mining “boom” recorded in the country over the years is seen as mining “doom” by mining communities who say mining has led to displacements with environmental degradation, cultural decadence and family disintegration being experienced. This came out during the launch of a research entitled *Communities, Companies and Conflict*, which was conducted by the Centre for Natural Resource Governance (CNRG) and held in Harare recently. The 2008 diamond mining surge coincided with declining overall economic performance and worsening inequality. This mineral boom has failed to change the welfare of mining

communities as witnessed by the sorry state of living standards of people who were moved from Marange to Arda Transau to pave way for mining companies diamonds extraction. The living standards of the displaced people are deplorable as the mining companies failed to fully make provision for viable livelihoods and compensate communities for the loss of properties and means of livelihoods, said CNRG. The mining sector has been marred with lack of transparency and accountability. It is argued that unstable and corrupt institutions compounded by government mismanagement of resources are the main causes of the resource curse.

Statement on Arrears Clearance Strategy

The Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) commends the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) for the expression of commitment to solving the debt crisis in Zimbabwe and relieve the tax payers of the adverse effects of the debt burden. On the 8th of October 2015, the GoZ held a meeting with its creditors, both bilateral and multilateral, to discuss its arrears clearance strategy on the side-lines of the 2015 World Bank/IMF annual Meetings in Lima, Peru. The meeting was convened by the three International Financial Institutions (IFIs) namely Africa Development Bank (AfDB), the World Bank Group (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This strategy was presented to resolve an external debt overhang of US\$ 6.7 billion as of 30th of June 2015 against an economic outlook characterised by low commodity prices, an appreciating U.S. dollar, low external inflows and low levels of international reserves. A greater component of the external debt is arrears amounting to US\$ 5.528 billion. Zimbabwe plans to clear its arrears of US\$ 110 million to the IMF, US\$ 1.15 billion to the WB and US\$ 601 million to the AfDB by the end of April 2016 to unlock access to fresh concessionary funding to stimulate economic recovery. It is expected that clearance of the external arrears to the IFIs would also lead to re-engagement with both the Paris and non-Paris Club creditors.

ZIMCODD has over the years been at the forefront of calling for the GoZ to come up with lasting solutions to the external debt crisis. It has consistently called for an official public debt audit to ascertain the sources of the debt, the social and economic impact of the loans on the ordinary citizens, whether or not the debts are legitimate and draw some lessons for future economic planning as an important step. This is in light of the fact that the country has remained enslaved to the international credit system. When the country is forced to pay huge percentages of its national annual budget just to pay the debt arrears, there is little room for human development and prosperity left.

Summary of the Strategy

The Government of Zimbabwe strategy is anchored on the 10 Point Plan Economic Reform agenda enunciated by the President during the August 2015 State of the Nation address. Zimbabwe's strategy entails clearing the external arrears with the IFIs through a combination of the country's resources, arrangement of Bridge finance with regional and international banks and the usage of bilateral loan facilities. According to the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Honourable Patrick Chinamasa, the strategy involves:

- Clearing the arrears to the three multinational institutions by the end of April 2016;
- Development of a new Comprehensive Country Financing Programme supported by the AfDB, the IMF and the WB that attract long term financing to promote growth and sustainability; and
- Engagement of the European Investment Bank (EIB), the Paris Club and non-Paris Club bilateral creditors for debt resolution on the strength of the performance under the above programme.

The GoZ has outlined specific aspects of the strategy as

Using the country's own

resources

In principle it is a noble idea since mobilising resources domestically is predictable and sustainable as compared to external financing. However, it is known that in recent years the GoZ has used future returns mineral extraction as security for certain loans. The most prominent one is the Chinese loan in 2011 towards the construction of a Defence College. Given the lack of clarity on how exactly the country's resources will be utilised in clearing arrears, one would hope that what is being proposed is dissimilar to the deals mentioned above. Furthermore, the country has lost a cumulative of US\$ 12 billion through illicit financial flows. If these were plugged, the country would have cleared its debts long back. In this vain, there is need for a strong and effective domestic resource mobilisation strategy that will curb illicit financial flows and enhance transparency and accountability in the management of domestic resources so as to increase potential financial resources for debt and arrears clearance.

Arrangement of Bridge financing

The GoZ also intends to apply for bridging loans to pave the way for new lines of credit. According to IMF rules, a country in arrears cannot get new loans, therefore clearing arrears is seen as critical in order to pave way for new financing. However, the new loans will in turn be used to repay the bridging loans with risk of creating a vicious cycle of debt. This clearly does not stimulate a sustainable solution to the current debt problem. If anything, the country is likely to end up in a worse debt situation. There is a need to carefully consider the structure of these bridging loans. ZIMCODD would recommend a situation where grants are given for bridging and not loans. In situations where the loans are concessional, this will only serve to increase Zimbabwe's long term outstanding obligations to the IFIs. It neither resolves the country's incapacity to service its debt, which by implication means that the country's debt overhang is likely to grow further.

Usage of bilateral loan facility

While the GoZ further plans to utilise the bilateral loan facility, which entails that the Government will enter into negotiations with the Paris Club and non-Paris Club for credit to finance the clearance of arrears, contracting new credits from bilateral creditors will only increase the external debt stock further imposing the repayment burden on the citizens.

Engagement with the European Investment Bank (EIB), the Paris Club and non-Paris Club bilateral creditors for debt resolution

The Government has stepped up reengagement efforts with creditors, including efforts to increase payments to the WB and the AfDB, a key step in the roadmap towards seeking rescheduling of bilateral official debt under the umbrella of the Paris Club. These developments constitute important steps toward reengaging with the IFIs. This strategy also intends to step up their efforts to build consensus among creditors and development partners on ways to address the external arrears. However, what is agreed as a way to redress the debt problem between and among the GoZ and its creditors should not infringe on social and economic development. The reengagements with the EIB, Paris Club and non-Paris Club also send a right signal to the international community and investors who had lost confidence

in dealing with IMF condemned states like Zimbabwe.

ZIMCODD's position regarding debt management

The current debt strategy's main aim is to clear arrears to unlock new lines of credit. The pitfall of this approach is that it overlooks sustainability as manifested by the Government's endeavour to use bridging loans only to access IFIs loans to repay the same loans. While new loans are justified as necessary in order to finance "infrastructure reconstruction and improving the quality of life of ordinary Zimbabweans", this is unlikely to be achieved without a clear debt sustainability strategy. The strategy's prioritisation of arrears repayment at the expense of sustainability, poverty reduction and social welfare obligations, fair remuneration for government employees among other things, is in conflict with its purported aim of improving the quality of life of Zimbabweans. Experiences where loans have been contracted to finance projects such as a defence college, put to doubt that new finances will be in line with developmental priorities. In the absence of proper, transparent and accountable loan contraction and public debt management systems, new finances are unlikely to result in meaningful improvements in people's social and economic well-being. ZIMCODD is concerned by the lack of visibility of Parliament in the ongoing processes. The constitution and the Public Debt Management are clear on the role of Parliament in public debt management. Parliament should start to exercise their duty in order to safeguard the interests and rights of the citizens.

ZIMCODD therefore recommends that:

- The GoZ commission an official debt audit to establish how much is owed, the purpose and condition under which loans were given, disbursement methods, whether objectives were met, charges other than interest and benefits and if any benefits accrued to the citizens. A debt audit process would strengthen the power of a future Zimbabwean Government in negotiations with creditors on the debt, since it would democratise the process and reveal the reckless lending of creditors. This will help to avoid past mistakes. The audit should cover both external and domestic public debt.
- The Government should come up with a Debt Management Strategy that will ensure that the country does not plunge into huge debt as efforts are made to re-engage with the IFIs and other bilateral partners.
- To pave way for the audit and in the interest of social and economic justice, the creditors must immediately institute a moratorium on principal and interest payments.
- The establishment of Zimbabwe's transparent and accountable institutions and transparent investment agreements which can guarantee efficient utilization of resources and revenue. This will reduce both illicit and licit financial flows in Zimbabwe thereby allowing the country to deal with its debt question effectively.
- The Government stops the rush into borrowing new money without being clear what the role of foreign lending is. There is need for prior examination of the appropriateness before signing for new loans by the Parliament.
- If there are any conditions on

the cancellation of the debts, these should not infringe on social and economic development. For example, the recommendation by the IMF for the Government to reduce the size of the public service's workforce is not palatable. This has negative impacts on the people as the poverty levels will increase.

- There be responsible lending from the creditors. At the moment, there is need for the creditors to give grants as primary financial assistance to

Zimbabwe instead of loans with conditions. Lenders should first determine whether the country has the absorptive capacity, the ability to pay and the social and economic impact of the loans, before they give the loans.

- The Government continues to lead in the process of resolving the debt crisis instead of allowing the external players to dictate the debt resolution strategies. In any negotiations around debt resolution strategies, both partners should be on equal footing.

Strategies for debt management should be located within a broader developmental vision of the country that balances growth, obligations to repay and human development. Sound debt management entails keeping the cost of repayment at minimum while the very debt is employed to build repayment capacity and develop domestic funding mechanisms. Building internal and citizen based revenue capacity is crucial since it enhances the link between taxation, state building and democratization.

ZIMCODD Tertiary Debates Go National



High school students participating in debates

The youth are a critical stakeholder in the social and economic justice discussion, hence ZIMCODD values their participation. One of the approaches adopted by ZIMCODD to harness the youths voices are tertiary institutions debates and public speaking competitions. These debates have turned into a national event and have also been up-scaled to the SADC People's summit.

The tertiary institution debates and public speaking gala for 2015 ran under the theme "Strengthening Youth Participation on Policy Advocacy". The gala was held in Harare on the 10th of October and was attended by students from 11 tertiary institutions which included teachers colleges, polytechnic colleges, private and public universities.

Students debated on issues that include Zimbabwe's tax system, social and economic rights realisation, ZIMASSET and the role of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committees (PPCs). On PPCs, students expressed that most of the PPCs have failed their mandate and are giving a false impression of democracy. The consultative meetings by these committees were described as being cosmetic procedures with most policies/bills being rubberstamped without cognisance of public recommendations, of note being the RBZ Debt Assumption Act which was passed despite being rejected by the majority of Zimbabweans during the consultative meetings. The affirmers on the other hand, firmly pointed out that the parliamentary portfolio committees' role cannot be underestimated as they perform pre-audit functions, monitor implementation of policies and also provide feedback which in most cases can be through whistle blowing. A case given as an example was that of the former Youth Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Minister, Saviour Kasukuwere, who was summoned in Parliament to explain how he administered the Marange-Zimunya Community Share Ownership Scheme between 2009 and 2013 when he was in charge of the portfolio. They highlighted that PPCs just need

to be given higher mandate and functions rather than doing away with them.

The issue of natural resources was also put under scrutiny as debaters stated that natural resources are finite. Therefore the proceeds must be used to finance sustainable development and the productive sector. There is also need for communities, especially the poor, to benefit from extraction of natural resources. With the current economic crisis bedevilling the country, students expressed that natural resources if properly managed would lift most of the populace out of the pitfalls of poverty through value addition and local businesses support such as preferred suppliers affirmative policies.

On the subject of ZIMASSET, students agreed that the Government had done a sterling job in formulating the policy but the implementation was dawdling, hence a lot has to be done. They also pointed out that the Government had to make sure that ZIMASSET would not become like the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) policy of the 1990s, a policy which had serious consequences and left the majority of Zimbabweans wallowing in abject poverty.

Simbarashe Murondoti, who came up tops in the public speaking category, urged the youth to stand their ground and be innovative and not wholly rely on the Government to provide employment. He also called on his fellow youth to be the forces which will be emulated by many. Universities and colleges that participated include Midlands State University, Lupane State University, University of Zimbabwe, Catholic University, Great Zimbabwe University, Chinhoyi University, Belvedere Teachers College, Mutare Polytechnic, Harare Polytechnic, Bulawayo Polytechnic and Hillside Teachers College.

Mutare Polytechnic came out tops in the debates taking the winner's trophy while Lupane State University came second. The University of Zimbabwe walked away with the third position.

The high school students also engaged in the debate fiesta. The National High School Students' debates was held on Saturday the 3rd of October 2015

with participants drawn from Bulawayo's Christian Brothers College, Founders High School, John Tallach High School and Harare Schools that included Kambuzuma High 1, Hatfield Girls High and Allan Wilson Boys School. It was a platform which allowed high school students to show how knowledgeable they are on issues of social and economic justice as enshrined in the constitution.

Students debated on various issues including the issue of corruption in the extractive sector and called on the anticorruption body to be revived and recapacitated to fully implement its mandate. On the topic of who should benefit from the country's natural resources, the students agreed that natural resources are a source of national wealth that should be invested in social and economic development.

Debating on the topic "This house believes that a lot of companies in Zimbabwe are looting natural resources and failing to pay tax", the affirmers agreed that tax evasion and avoidance by companies is attributed to weak policy and institutional frameworks which give room for companies to evade tax as they take advantage of the flaws in the tax system. They also expressed the need for the Government to ensure that no citizens are denied access to health by mentioning that the Government should ensure that all its citizens have access to health and education as they are basic rights enshrined in the constitution and various international declarations.

The Southern region schools walked away with all the trophies with Founders High School representatives grabbing the gold trophy while Christian Brothers College came second and John Tallach in third position.

ZIMCODD debate and public speaking galas started in 2012 and have been developed into a fully-fledged annual national competition. Through debate and public speaking, ZIMCODD seeks to encourage research and the growth of a concerned citizenry among the students, their teachers and community as a whole. Armed with these skills and knowledge the community will be enriched in the knowledge on constitutional, social and economic rights as well as a critical understanding of government policy, debt management and illicit outflows.

The debates and public speaking gala is part of ZIMCODD's strategy to raise the economic literacy level among the students and facilitate the building of a vibrant youth movement on social and economic justice. Experts on issues being debated are invited to provide clarifications on content issues raised by students further helping students to gain insightful information.