



Investing in People for Social & Economic Justice

PRESS RELEASE

Zim @40: Elusive Dream of Economic Emancipation & Unfulfilled Promises

Zimbabwe @40!!! Zimbabweans are grateful for the sovereignty brought by the armed struggle which gave birth to Zimbabwe's independence. Nevertheless, the stark reality we are faced with as a nation clearly highlights that it's not yet 'Uhuru' for the majority of citizens living in poverty and deprivation. Political independence without social and economic independence is incomplete. According to the World Bank, extreme poverty in Zimbabwe is estimated to have risen from 29% in 2018 to 34% in 2019, an increase from 4.7 to 5.7 million people. Although the government gave first priority to the eradication of poverty in 1980 as alluded to by Zimstats (2011), through a number of homegrown initiatives such as Growth Equity of 1981 and the Zimbabwe Transitional National Development Plan (1982-1985), this vision was aborted along the way as Zimbabwe is still bemoaning poverty forty years down the line.

It is unfortunate that the situation is in contrary to the promises made by the late former President Robert Mugabe in his maiden speech as the Prime Minister Elect delivered on 4 March 1980 saying that,

"I wish to assure all the people that my government will strive to bring about meaningful change to their lives. But everyone should exercise patience, for change cannot occur overnight... Let us constitute a oneness derived from our common objectives to build a great Zimbabwe that will be the pride of all Africa."

Social and Economic Independence- Zimbabwe is not yet there

The status quo clearly shows that the revolutionary ethos was dumped as many continue hoping for better lives 40 years later. The experience of a dignified life continues to be a pipe dream for the majority. The Southern African country has unfortunately regressed from being the jewel of Africa to being a charity case saddled by a huge debt burden and aid dependent. Maladministration and institutionalised corruption highlighted in successive [Auditor General's Reports](#) have reversed the gains of independence. Zimbabwe was ranked number 158 out of 180 countries 2019 on the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) by Transparency International and it was also highlighted that the country is losing a staggering US\$1,8 billion annually to corruption. US\$1.8 billion is a lot of money that can potentially transform citizens' lives and the nation at large. The hope presented by the ushering in of a new dispensation in 2017 is continuously facing impediments with corruption while poor governance thrives. This is despite President Emmerson Mnangagwa's promises that, "On individual cases of corruption, every case must be investigated and punished in accordance with the dictates of our laws. My government will have zero tolerance towards corruption." Promises for better lives were

made by President E.D Mnangagwa in his inaugural speech but they are yet to see the light of the day.

“Of course, the physical and social infrastructure must be repaired and expanded to position our country in readiness for economic growth, employment creation, equity, freedom and democracy, and for the provision of vital social goods, principally health, shelter, clean water, education and other key social services.”

Despite these promises, it is a fact that this year Zimbabwe’s independence is celebrated without much enthusiasm on the part of citizens. This year’s celebrations are coming under a dark cloud of disappointment amongst citizens amidst the worsening social and economic conditions. They are coming amidst wanton and indiscriminate increases of prices amidst erosion of wages and incomes, which has brought untold suffering to citizens already wallowing in abject poverty and discrimination. The World Bank attributes the increase in extreme poverty in Zimbabwe to the economic contraction and the sharp rise in prices of food and basic commodities. The economy is getting worse and COVID-19 ravaging the world is worsening the situation. The majority of citizens are celebrating independence on empty stomachs, dry taps, joblessness, dilapidated public health system and in lockdown as a measure to reduce transmission of the COVID-19 pandemic. The once envied education system has crumbled, unemployment is floating at about 90%, hyperinflation has reached unprecedented levels and the liquidity crunch is biting.

The austerity measures introduced in 2019 against the backdrop of deep socio-economic did not help the situation, rather they further relegated ordinary citizens into abject poverty and cultivated an enabling environment for inequality to thrive. Austerity measures are imposed upon the ordinary while the elites continue to enjoy their luxuries. This year citizens are celebrating independence in far worse socioeconomic situation than they were in 2019. Budget cuts in public service delivery in areas such as health further relegated ordinary citizens to abject poverty. The austerity measures further widened the income gap between citizens that has seen low income households disproportionately bearing the cost of cuts on social protection programs which are meant for elderly persons, people with disability and beneficiaries of other social safety programs. This is highly contrary to government efforts soon after independence as the government accorded a high proportion of its expenditure to social sectors. According to Zimstats (2011), social spending as a share of total government expenditure rose from 25.7% in 1980/81 to 34.9% in 1990/91. One wonders, forty years on, where did we miss it?

The inequalities driven by race during the pre-independence period reincarnated in post independent Zimbabwe in many forms. Inequality is rife with disparities in gender and political representation manifesting in different forms. The huge tax burden as highlighted by the infamous 2% affects the rich and the poor disproportionately as it is the latter who feel the heat. Quality healthcare for instance has remained a preserve for the few where public health institutions are now ‘death traps.’ What is most worrying is the fact that it is ordinary citizens who depend more on these public health institutions whilst the elites seek quality health services abroad. Is this what an independent Zimbabwe has to offer, benefiting a handful of people at the expense of the majority?

What can be done?

- The socioeconomic woes faced by the country are born out of maladministration and corruption and it is high the government support line ministries, government departments

and local authorities to implement the Office of the [Auditor General](#) audits recommendations. Thorough investigations on anomalies must be investigated and information should be available in the public domain for citizens to hold the duty bearers accountable.

- Zimbabwe is not poor but impoverished. The country has potential for social and economic transformation as presented in the country's vast mineral resources. Efforts to combat corruption and maladministration must be coupled by ensuring effective and prudent utilisation of public resources for national development as provided for in the Constitution. This must be coupled by the adopt of global best practices in mineral resource governance, curbing illicit financial flows, revising unfair tax incentives and recognition of small-scale miners' contribution to mineral revenue and support their mining equipment and financial needs.
- Informal employment is the major source of employment and income for the majority of Zimbabweans. Contributions of the informal sector must be valued and integrated into the formal economic planning and legal frameworks. The government must therefore create an enabling safe operating environment and facilitate the transition of workers and economic units from the informal to the formal economy while respecting workers' fundamental rights and ensuring opportunities for income security, livelihoods and entrepreneurship as recommended by the International Labour Organisation.
- The Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission must be capacitated to must be capacitated to eradicate corruption and mismanagement of public funds. There must, therefore, be greater commitment and political will from the Office of the President Cabinet (OPC) which goes beyond verbal pronouncements and translates to actions which arrests and punish perpetrators of corruption.
- Citizens' involvement and participation is one of the cardinal principles of good governance. The government must ensure effective citizen participation in economic governance processes in both policy formulation and implementation so that citizens' needs, rights and aspirations are catered for. This also helps in ensuring that citizens hold duty bearers to account.
- The government must put in place an effective Domestic Resource Mobilisation strategy for the country to escape from the Aid and Debt dependence syndrome.
- The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development should develop and implement fiscal policies that distribute the burden of taxation and public spending in a manner that prioritizes the needs and aspirations of marginalised groups and ultimately protect and promote human rights as enshrined in the national constitution.
- For youths to enjoy the fruits of independence, the government must respect the Constitution and ensure active youth participation in economic policy making processes and create a conducive working environment for youth both in the formal and informal sector. This must involve consultation and inclusion of youths in policy formulation processes beyond political choreography.

Contact Details

9 Bargate Road, Mount Pleasant, Harare

Email: zimcodd@zimcodd.co.zw

Tel/Fax: +263-242-776830

Website: www.zimcodd.org

Facebook Page: Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development

Twitter [@zimcodd1](#)