

BreakFree

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NEWSLETTER 2021
ISSUE 1



ZIMCODD

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From the Directors' Desk

Dear Reader, We are very happy to share with you our first edition of the Break free newsletter for 2021. As ZIMCODD, we acknowledge and remain concerned over the persisting challenges being posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for collective effort to regain and recover from what was lost due to stagnation that characterized 2020. Our work on social and economic justice has become more difficult yet so important given the circumstances that the majority of the citizens find themselves in.

Although our social and cultural fabric has tried to remain intact, we have seen our society slowly denigrating with an increase in the number of crimes. Criminal methods commonly include robbery, petty theft, vehicle burglary, home invasion, and smash-and-grab vehicle break-ins. These crimes are unfortunately met with a police force that has limited capacity to act on all the crimes and recover what many lose from their hard-earned cash. According to a 2020 crime and safety report on Zimbabwe, it has been noted that crime has increased 10-20% across most sectors in the past few years and this has been driven mostly by thirst for genuine U.S. Dollars for export or exchange.

In the face of the continued challenges from the pandemic, we are witnessing the inequality gap widening. People's income and livelihoods continue to be constrained especially with no support for recovery for mainly those in the informal economy whose operations have been affected by the many lockdowns that were put in place to contain the spread of COVID-19.

With our continued call for improved transparency and accountability in the way that public resources are managed, we have taken the speech and expressed commitment to deal with corruption by the Malawi's new President Lazarus Chakwera as refreshing. Chakwera said the plunder is contained in the recent Auditor General's report which looks into how the government managed its finances for the past two years. We can only hope that our political leadership in the country are taking note and can emulate a similar stance on addressing corruption and ensure accountability of how public resources are used in the country. But then, our hope is dampened when we note that we are still waiting for the 2019 auditor general's report whilst implementation of recommendations has never reached our expectations with most actions by government described as an exercise of "Catch and Release".

In this edition we explore articles on COVID-19 and build a case on why our attention should still be maintained on how resources towards the pandemic are mobilised and managed. We are shaping the narrative on how the post COVID-19 pandemic looks like for general citizens. Our focus on women and youth continues unabated because we understand how they remain the most marginalized and vulnerable in the economic reality. We look at the advocacy initiatives that focus on youth as a strategic cohort in the advocacy and campaigns work of ZIMCODD. On women's issues we share a special on what it means to be a woman as a product of who defines it. Influenced by personal reflections and recognition of being one of the most iconic women in the past decade, this article is instrumental in challenging power and the idea of framing on the reality of how women perceive themselves.

The articles in this edition are a mix of both individual contributions and from the organisational perspective which are based on our collective work within the first quarter of 2021. As is our tradition with the break free, we often seek to bring not just articles that outline our work but also those from individuals that try make us think and rethink about different issues that help us to "Break free" and find better expression. We are always happy to receive any contribution from those who feel our publication can offer them space to express their views and opinions that can shape discussions on issues of public resource management.

2021 Key Programme Priorities

from the Programme Manager's Desk

Our shock tolerance was stretched in 2020 and we have had to resort to new ways of working, mostly relying on virtual platforms with very minimal human interaction. Even under these difficult conditions, in 2020 we became bolder in our approach to work and in 2021 we hope to consolidate on our successes but also scale up on our work as guided by our strategic plan.

The year 2021 is a very crucial year for ZIMCODD, as greater demand is placed on ZIMCODD to demonstrate leadership in advocating for social and economic justice. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the already distressed economic and developmental conditions for the majority of Zimbabweans. As such ZIMCODD will invest further in enhancing social and economic justice and mobilise support for increased transparency and accountability initiatives.

Cognisant of the new economic development trajectory, the National Development Strategy one (1) (2020-2025) which is based on market fundamentals and neo-liberal ideological orthodox, ZIMCODD will continue to advocate for public policies that are pro-poor, and people oriented; and to engage with all oversight bodies to ensure transparency and accountability in the management of public resources

The 'new normal' requires ZIMCODD to come up with more innovative approaches in programming making sure that no one is left behind. As an organisation we will continue to raise citizen awareness of and informed participation in the country's public finance management and resource mobilisation processes. With this in mind, the community voices and citizen engagement remain pivotal. More importantly, the work of ZIMCODD will continue to be guided by the 2020-2023 strategic plan which is premised on the feminized approach and a focus on youth. ZIMCODD, will also thrive to maintain current funding partners and explore new funding opportunities and work toward self-sustainability.

For 2021, our key programme priorities seek to maintain the active participation of citizens in public finance management issues, ensure that we actively engage with policy makers and various solution holders in our quest to influence improved legislative provisions on the management of public resources in the country and promote people driven and people centred accountability and oversight on the way public resources are managed. These interventions are anchored on our strategic plan which outlines the following objectives:

- To raise the level of economic literacy among ZIMCODD members to include views and participation of grassroots and marginalised communities;
- To facilitate research, lobbying and advocacy in order to influence and promote policy change;
- To formulate credible and sustainable economic and social policy alternatives; and
- To develop a national coalition and facilitate the building of a vibrant movement for social and economic justice.

In achieving both our strategic vision and key programme priorities for 2021, some of our signature activities will include capacity building of citizens especially youth and women so that they take an active role in the management of public resources as well as its tracking and monitoring, using processes such as the budget cycle and auditor general report to press for accountability. Linked to this is our thrust for campaigning and we will seek to lead campaigns that are designed to activate citizens to be part of movements that are designed to press for accountability and demand for the effective and judicious use of the country's resources. The campaigns will also focus on issues such as tax, debt and the various economic issues that require urgent redress.

This year we will also intensify our evidence-based advocacy with key surveys and research work such as the open budget survey, annual debt analysis and utilization of digital platforms to reach out to many people especially within the context of limited physical meetings.

MANAGING THE COUNTRY'S PUBLIC DEBT REMAINS A PRIORITY

Public debt in Zimbabwe continues to be one of the main challenges facing the economy and there is a continued need for a shared understanding of the debt challenges between various stakeholders and the Public Debt Management Office (PDMO). With a shared understanding, the country stands at a better place of forging for collective solutions. Inclusive, transparent, and widely consultative debt resolution strategies are the best way to resolve the national debt question. In this regard, the PDMO has done well to engage meaningfully including by participating in the 2020 Multi-Stakeholder Debt Conference jointly organised by ZIMCODD & AFRODAD.

ZIMCODD and the PDMO both acknowledge that Zimbabwe is in debt distress and that the resolution of the national debt challenges is a shared priority amongst numerous stakeholders including Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), private sector, citizens and the International Community. Several positive steps bear testimony to a marked improvement in transparency of Debt information over the past few years. Such notable steps include but not limited to the release of the 2019 Debt Bulletin by the PDMO; Submission to Parliament of the Report on loans borrowed by the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ); and inclusion of an annex in the 2021 National Budget Statement on Debt Repayment Schedule on public debt, charges and penalties dating back to 1980.

In its thrust to support and collaborate with the PDMO, ZIMCODD believes that the following levers are essential in working on public debt issues in Zimbabwe:

i. Public Debt Literacy: ZIMCODD seeks to enhance public awareness of the debt question and its broader impact through the reproduction and dissemination of Annual Debt Bulletins utilising simplified, vernacular, sign language, fliers, brochures and other mechanisms to increase citizen awareness.

ii. National Debt Audit/ Validation and a Sustainable Debt Management Framework: ZIMCODD would like to be granted permission to disseminate the periodic debt validation audits done by the PDMO as these are critical building blocks towards resolving the nation's debt challenges.

iii. The Medium-Term Debt Management Strategy: As the current Medium Term Debt Management Strategy 2017-2021 (MTDMS) comes to an end, ZIMCODD is hoping to participate in consultative processes to inform the development of the next debt management strategy.

iv. Development of a Comprehensive COVID-19 Debt Relief Strategy: ZIMCODD recommends the development of a comprehensive COVID-19 Debt Relief Strategy to manage and address the impacts of new COVID-19 borrowings on the existing debt position. The outbreak of the global pandemic COVID-19 has resulted in a wave of new debt contractions to finance various pandemic response interventions.

v. Development of a Debt Monitoring Mechanism: ZIMCODD suggests the development of a National Debt Monitoring Mechanism to provide objective and independent feedback and analysis of the national debt position. Accurate information to inform policy and an early warning system to protect the public interest will enhance the Mechanism's relevance.

vi. Production of the Annual Debt Management Report and hosting the annual High-Level Debt Conference: ZIMCODD acknowledges the important role of Civil Society participation in ensuring the relevance and legitimacy of the Annual Debt Management Report and the Annual Multi-stakeholder Debt Conference. Zimbabwean Civil Society and Government have a shared interest in reporting and speaking with one voice regarding the state of Zimbabwe debt and the need for debt cancellation.

vii. Development of a Comprehensive Debt Management Policy: ZIMCODD and PDMO agree on the need for all stakeholders to agree and rally behind a Comprehensive Debt Management Policy in the national interest and for Government borrowing decisions to be undertaken with respect to established national policy frameworks.

ZIMCODD will engage with the Macroeconomic and Financial Management Institute of Eastern and Southern Africa (MEFMI) which already has a working agreement with the PDMO on jointly producing the 2021 Debt Bulletin and the Medium-Term Debt Management Strategy. PDMO and ZIMCODD will endeavour to continue nurturing the relationship through continuous engagements and communications possibly leading to a memorandum of agreement between ZIMCODD and the PDMO.

Why COVID-19 Resource Tracking remains important

By Muchanyara Midzi

ZIMCODD continues to monitor resources allocated to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as how these resources are used through its COVID-19 resource tracker. As many of us are now experiencing some level of fatigue due to this virus, we seek to restate and reaffirm that there is still relevance in tracking COVID-19 resources.

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic did not only cause a health pandemonium, but a governance crisis too since many governments were caught unprepared. To respond to the threat and reduce the impact of the pandemic on the economies and citizens, governments had to mobilize resources and purchase goods and services needed to fight the pandemic.

The World Bank (2020) noted that governments had to engage in a public procurement overdrive as a way of addressing the pressing challenges emanating from COVID-19. However, the public choice theory posits that public officials are motivated by self-aggrandizement i.e. the desire to fulfil self-interest before anything else. This background therefore underscores the need for constant monitoring and examination of the use of COVID-19 resources, especially by the Zimbabwean government which has a record of flouting procurement regulations, abuse and mismanagement of public funds as perennially revealed by the Auditor General's reports.

Tracking and monitoring of COVID-19 resource use is more apparent now than ever so as to promote horizontal accountability and transparency in the face of a third wave. ZIMCODD in the first quarter of 2021 continued on its initiative to track the mobilisation, allocation and expenditure of COVID-19 earmarked resources, using its resource tracker, to inculcate transparency and accountability on COVID-19 funds. The resource tracker also empowers citizens with information to hold the government to account on allocation and utilisation of COVID-19 resources.

It is commendable that the Zimbabwean government has continued to put in place measures to curtail the spread of COVID-19 and to avert the effects of the pandemic on the economy and its citizens. These include reintroducing a 30-day level 4 lockdown from the 2nd of January 2021 following a spike in COVID-19 cases after Christmas and New Year holidays; setting aside US\$ 100 million for the procurement of

20 million doses targeting 10 million people (60% of the population) in a bid to reach herd immunity; and, rolling out COVID-19 vaccines as an additional layer of protection against COVID-19 infection among other measures.

The vaccination programme was launched on 18 February 2021 and is expected to continue until all eligible people have been vaccinated. On 31st March 2021, 4051 people received their first vaccine dose bringing the cumulative first vaccine dose to 76 995 while 1,427 received their second vaccine dose bringing the cumulative second vaccine dose to 14885 people across the country. By March 31st, Zimbabwe had mobilized a total of US\$767,615,257 in pledges with US\$563,728,071 honoured and US\$305,881,082 utilized so far in both the first line and the second line response. What remains worrying, as revealed by the COVID-19 resource tracker updates, is: the lack of an accountability mechanism for COVID-19 funds and resources; the opacity around the financing of the US\$100 million announced by the government on 31st January 2021 to be set aside for the procurement of the vaccines; the secrecy around COVID-19 related debt contraction; corruption scandals; continued abuse of office and mismanagement of COVID-19 funds by public officials, which has been condemned by ZIMCODD as it promotes self-aggrandizement at the detriment of the poor and vulnerable; the catch and release on cases of grand corruption among others.

The COVID-19 resource tracker remains pivotal in increasing public awareness on COVID-19 resource mobilization and expenditure, identifying and flagging areas of concern and impediments in resource flows. It should be noted that the success of the National COVID-19 Response Strategy is hinged on transparent, accountable and prudent use of COVID-19 resources in the face of scarce resources. Below we summarise key asks from COVID-19 resource tracking in the first quarter of 2021:

KEY ASKS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ZIMBABWE

1. RELEASE THE COVID-19 FUNDS AUDIT REPORT - The COVID-19 2020 Audit Report must be released according to section 309 of the constitution read together with Chapter 22:18 of the Audit Office Act. This¹ is expected to shed light on COVID-19 social protection funds, economic stimulus funds, debt borrowings and other COVID-19 earmarked resource expenditures. Public scrutiny and debate over the Report will greatly enrich transparency and accountability in Public Finance Management.

2. STRENGTHEN PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT & SCRUTINY OVER COVID-19 RESOURCE SPENDING INCLUDING PROCUREMENTS - The parliament is a key oversight institution to address the unresolved challenges and gaps within the public procurement system which have paved way for corruption and mismanagement of COVID-19 resources. Examples of such cases include the Dr Obadiah Moyo's Drax scandal case in 2020 where he corruptly awarded a US\$60 million COVID-19 supplies contract and the Portia Manangazira's procurement scandal and abuse of COVID-19 resources in 2021, find ZIMCODD's statement on Corrupt use of COVID-19 Resources here <http://zimcodd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/ZIMCODD-Statement-COVID-19-R esources-corruption-2.03.2021.pdf>.² Parliamentary oversight and scrutiny of major public procurement process is therefore vital to safeguard against corruption in public procurement processes.

3. INCREASE DEBT TRANSPARENCY - Transparency is a central tenet of good fiscal governance and international borrowing practices however, the government has been borrowing with disregard to legislative provisions for openness and transparency. Government should do more to timeously disclose to the citizens loans and guarantees that place a fiscal obligation on Zimbabwe. In the first quarter of 2021, treasury entered into a 25-year debt agreement with the Arab Economic Bank for US\$10 million to help finance the national response to COVID-19 without parliament's approval. Parliamentary involvement in the acquisition and sustainable management of public debt is therefore crucial to restore public confidence in the country's debt management capacity. As such, transparency in COVID-19 related debt contraction can be enhanced by Parliamentary debate and stakeholder consultation to refrain from unwarranted borrowing. Furthermore, there has to be improved publication of loans by government in the government gazette and timely publication of debt bulletins.

4. REORGANISE ZIMBABWE'S SOCIAL PROTECTION MECHANISMS - The rampant abuse and mismanagement of public funds particularly the government's safety nets to cushion the vulnerable during the pandemic remains a major concern. The government must therefore urgently institute an efficient, just and equitable social protection system to mitigate the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on poor and vulnerable groups including the informal sector which has become more vulnerable than ever. A universal basic income is highly recommended as a means to safeguard poor and vulnerable Zimbabweans from falling deeper into the poverty trap and a special COVID-19 relief support should be provided for the informal sector.

5. IMPROVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION TO INCREASE COVID-19 VACCINE UPTAKE - access to information is a key element of empowerment as it promotes civic participation hence without sufficient information on vaccinations, it will be difficult to achieve herd immunity as national statistics of vaccinated people indicate a low uptake of the national vaccination programme. The government must therefore channel resources towards a COVID-19 vaccination campaign aimed at challenging and factually disputing fake news which have dissuaded vaccine acceptance by the majority of citizens.

¹ The mandate of the Auditor General is to audit the accounts, financial systems and financial management of all departments, institutions and agencies of Government.

² <http://zimcodd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/ZIMCODD-Statement-COVID-19-Resources-corruption-2.03.2021.pdf>

POST COVID-19 STATE OF ECONOMY

Innocent Bayai

COVID-19 imposed a world-wide recession as the combination of lockdowns, fear, uncertainty and movement restrictions stalled and interrupted productivity and growth.

For Zimbabwe, COVID-19 worsened the prospects of a country already battered by weak macro-fiscal policy frameworks and natural disasters on the back of a narrowing tax base and legacy debt challenges. This situation makes growth a priority in the post COVID-19.

Countries such as Zimbabwe need to address the massive job losses experienced during the pandemic, closure of companies and the decimation of SMEs. Resumption of trade and opening of international value chains is expected to support capacity utilization in the industrial sector. Agriculture is expected to boost growth given the good rains – buttressing food security, feeding the processing industry and improving export earnings from the sale of tobacco and cotton amongst innumerable agricultural exports. The recovery of the SME sector, especially those in the productive sector is likely to add to the growth.



However, government's ambitious growth forecast of 74% in 2021 is dampened by limited foreign financial support from international development partners (IMF, WB and AfDB), prompting government to borrow locally. Local borrowing is an albatross to growth as it crowds out the productive private sector, tone down aggregate demand and discount the economy's growth potential.

Domestic resource mobilization challenges spell a constricted fiscal support for industry whereas the close-ended foreign currency auction system selectively limits the unrealized potential of economic agents outside the priority list. Tourism and hotel industry is expected to remain subdued as international travel continues to be constrained by fears of a third COVID-19 wave. The drive for local tourism is marred by low disposable income for the majority of the working class further afflicting the recovery of the sector.

The growth projection is also a function of how the vaccination process progresses in getting the herd immunity (10 million people, 60% of the population). The freedom to do business might be curtailed if less people get vaccinated. Already, the trend shows the public's hesitancy in taking COVID-19 vaccine, amidst fears of a third wave brewing as schools record a surge in positive cases. Also, the acquisition of the vaccine is a financial burden to the fiscus as evidenced by government's call to individuals and corporates to crowd fund the purchase of COVID-19 vaccines.

The continued fight against COVID-19 is an on-going diversion of resources that could have been channelled towards public capital investments (infrastructure, human capital development and power generation). In a worst-case scenario, a lock down of the economy to contain the third wave might further damage the economy's recovery.

In line with the NDS1's ambition of modernizing the economy with respect to the adoption of technology, the post COVID-19 era should be more tech-based as the pandemic has debunked physical business conduct. The economy is expected to adopt an array of technology and new tech-based businesses capitalising this is in sync with the global trend where the digital revolution has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The health care sector is also expected to experience growth as the demand for health care, PPE and COVID-19 preventive medical provisions shall remain in demand. Massive transformation shall be experienced in the health sector through tech-based solutions where a physical visit to doctors will not be tenable. Though at a slow pace, the economy might experience a substitution of capital for labour such as the adoption of robotics where humans were conventionally employed. Also, with the rural areas being relatively safe from COVID-19, investments might be relocating to peri urban and rural areas. This might be a good move for the development of once neglected peripheries.

YOUTH SUSTAINING ENGAGEMENT ON PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT

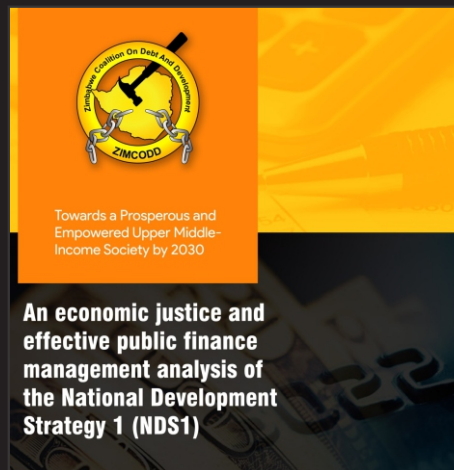
By Nqobazhitha Mlambo



ZIMCODD continues to create space for young people to lead in its programmatic activities on public finance management advocacy work, initiatives and campaigns.

Through its already existing youth structures organized in Youth and Governance Hubs as well as a dedicated groups for university and college students, which comprises tertiary students who are products of ZIMCODD's social accountability monitoring trainings on PFM activism, the coalition continues to witness a growth in its youth Social and Economic Justice Ambassadors.

Embracing the opportunities and strengths presented by the internet and virtual spaces/platforms, ZIMCODD has tapped into its youth structures to implement a series of online based activities and initiatives. For example, ZIMCODD has encouraged youth SEJAs to produce vlogs and podcasts on different topics around debt justice, tax justice as well as Social Justice Activism. In addition, a greater number of ZIMCODD youth have created their individual blog sites where they are producing social and economic justice content that further adds to the organization's advocacy efforts around debt transparency, the implementation of social and economic rights, effective and efficient social service delivery as well as youth activism in challenging contexts like Zimbabwe and the COVID-19 pandemic.



An economic justice and effective public finance management analysis of the National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1)

The coalition joined forces with other progressive civic organizations and citizens in online and offline advocacy campaigns against the removal of the Chilonga people from their land which the government intended to give to a capitalist agro-monopoly Dendairy (Pvt) (Ltd). The online campaign dubbed #SaveChilonga and #BoycottDendairy gained traction online particularly on twitter and Facebook. Through this campaign ZIMCODD together with other civic organizations and individual citizens with youth on the forefront, amplified the Chilonga people's cause for protecting and defending their land which remains a source of livelihood.

In the first quarter of 2021, the coalition has been consistently engaged in advocacy work around transparency in the management of COVID-19 funds. Through the coalition's online based COVID-tracker, ZIMCODD has been consistently informing the citizens what the country has been receiving in terms of COVID-19 funds. This is an important tool that aims at contributing to transparency and accountability in public finance management.

Still on the issue of transparency in PFM, the coalition's advocacy work around the need for transparency on the RBZ's forex auction system bore fruit when the RBZ started publishing, on a regular basis, the list of entities, companies and corporations that are benefitting from the apex bank's forex auction system. To this end, advocacy work that focuses on transparency and accountability in public finance management remains a key component of ZIMCODD's work.

Lastly, making good use of its growing youth structures, ZIMCODD continues to maintain consistent online presence when it comes to online advocacy initiatives as well as citizen engagement. However, beyond its online presence, the coalition is also visible within and among communities through its Social and Economic Justice Ambassadors who continue to do individual and collective advocacy initiatives especially after participating in ZIMCODD programmes like constituency indabas and public finance reform Indabas.



Defining womanhood matters in addressing the political and economic

By Janet Zhou

Social, political and economic challenges continue to have different implications on women and men as well as vary according to one's age making this world mostly an "old men's club". It is therefore important to always look at the position of women and how society defines them as a way of ensuring that we find pockets of opportunity to further their empowerment and emancipation.

The month of March remains special on the calendars as women are celebrated for who they are and being a woman is recognised as a big thing across society. 2021 has been very special to me because for the first time I had a newspaper-wholly run by women- the Business Connect in Zimbabwe celebrate me as one of the iconic women of the past decade in Zimbabwe.

It was a shocker to me and to many because normally my kind of work often goes unnoticed. I lead a not-for profit organisation and many times because it intersects with my passions, even myself I do not even recognise my work and contribution in society that much.

The recognition of my work made me smile but above all made me think about how women have been defined and why it is important to leave that power of defining womanhood and being a woman to the one who is a woman. When the thoughts hit me, I could not sleep and continuously tossed in my bed. Thoughts of long past started running in my mind about my first versions of definitions of being a woman that I heard from adults around me, in particular male adults in my family or who had access to my nuclear family by way of family extension in my culture.

Growing up, I never had a definition of what a woman is at least in terms of gender roles or what a woman can do or not do. I never defined myself as a girl who will grow into a woman. I never had expectations of occupying the spaces I had seen most woman in my life- the kitchen, the fields, the market etc.

In fact, in retrospect I enjoyed boys' company as I grew up. In order of birth, I come after five boys so maybe that explains my lack of identification with being a woman at that tender age. I enjoyed being in the presence of my brothers who would be talking about their stories with their girlfriends, potential girlfriends and what was happening at their workplaces.

I could not be found in the kitchen or fields with my mother, sisters in law or other girls we stayed with at my mother's invitation. It never fascinated me, it was boring and too mundane and a waste of time because I guess I did not see their lifestyles improve but as for my brothers I saw that after school they got jobs, were now working and bringing lots of goodies for us.

As I kept growing and the years went by, I realised the uneasiness in my brothers' eyes to talk about their stuff whilst I was in the room and how certain stories, they started avoiding in my presence. What followed of course was that the circumstances forced me to join other women in doing household chores and when I refused, I was definitely defined as lazy and seemingly rebellious! That did not bother me much though because deep inside I never felt like I was a lazy being.

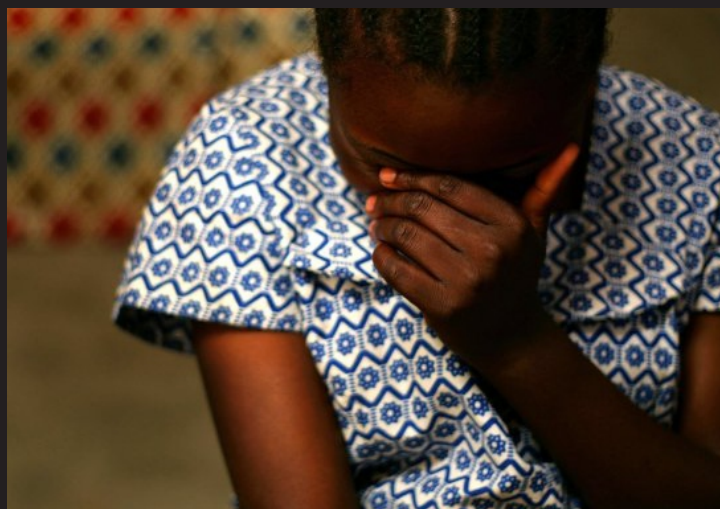
In the years to come, I came head on with the definition of my womanhood. I had two or three incidences that spoke about my womanhood and in spite of being young back then- about 11 or 12 years, I still remember how uncomfortable I was about those incidences.

I still vividly remember how the definitions of my womanhood felt so wrong, so inappropriate. On one of the incidences, I was by our shops in the village to catch a bus to town. One of my much-respected male relation, long dead now (I will withhold their name for the sake of their surviving family) was there and I did the traditional greetings as expected. I grew up a very cheerful girl and I would not pass an adult without proper greetings and smiling to show I was truly happy to see them. The man kept a longish chat with me and in that chat, said something that really got me scared. He said "ooh you're now a woman, you are ripe because you now have hair in your armpits..." He said this in our local language and with promiscuity showing all over his face, up to now I can see in my mind how his eyes were looking at me- like a dog salivating for a bone. I was dumbfounded and hurriedly left him in deep embarrassment and shock as well because I never knew that hair in the armpits defined that a girl is now "ripe for anything".

The second incident was with a man very close to me, a brother-in-law, my sister's husband. He did an act which left me with no trust for him at all. In my culture a brother-in-law can play what is called "Chiramu" with his sisters in law who are younger than his wife. Though this is an old tradition I still believe some mischievous men still do it because of my first-hand experience with that deadly cultural practice. Despite being a young girl, I dismissed that cultural practice at a very tender age, my body was for me and it was sacrosanct like that.

Anyhow, one day whilst my sister was at work, my brother-in-law came back from work and I served him his food and he ate in my presence. After having finished his food I took the plates so that I could wash them and, boom another womanhood defining moment was thrown at me. My brother-in-law approached me and held my hand whilst expressing that I now had breasts and he wanted to touch them! At that moment I did not scream, nonetheless my reaction was a thunderbolt, I managed to release my hand from his grip and sneaked through under his arm and out the door I went. What I know is that my reaction shocked him. He followed my sister to work and on their way from my sister's workplace, he jokingly told my sister about what had happened. He downplayed it; I do not know what he said but I think he told my sister he just wanted to see how I would react to "chiramu". I know because my sister called me separately and patted me on the back and said well done, your brother-in-law told me he wanted to test you and you ran away. What my sister did not know is that it was just not an escape; I twisted his arm really hard to save myself from being fondled.

From these two incidences my womanhood was clearly defined by things I had no control over, natural biological development processes that happen to both girls and boys. Womanhood was defined by hair in my armpits and breasts on my chest. For other girls it could be by bums, puberty acne break-out and whatever else those whom society has given power to define it choose to. What is also clear from the two incidences is that I never had defined myself that way, I had never really tracked my growing into womanhood in terms of biological changes in my body, I did not pay much attention to those hormonal changes.



I had my preferred definition of my being, my womanhood. My definitions had to do with what I was capable of doing, what I could conquer despite my age and gender.

I am one person who cherished a bus break down that would make me arrive home at night so that I could walk from our bus stop and pass through the bush by myself in the thick of the night. Why I liked those escapades from the bus stop which was about 3kms from home was that I would pass through a spot well known for a tormenting ghost that would give travellers hell of time by sometimes being a fire or making one lose the way and go round and round until morning. I would pass through that place with my heart in my hand, running and saying a little prayer until I got home. My mother will open the door, pleasantly surprised and ask if I travelled safely and saw nothing and every time my story was of victory- no ghost could torment me. I never saw any ghosts or had my hairs stand up when passing some of those ghost tormented places. My definition of womanhood in those moments was about how brave I was. So, in many situations I always want to be that brave woman, who can stand up even in a room packed with people well above me in accomplishments and still say out my mind and represent those without that privilege, as yet.



My other definitions of self from my childhood were that of efficiency and effectiveness. You see, I used to be sent to run some errands for my mother, sisters or brothers on a number of times. I always wanted to be quick at returning home, so I could run even 5kms to get where I would have been sent bringing whatever I am sent to get or deliver in the shortest period of time and doing it as sent or deploying my skills to even do it better.

I never wanted to be defined as what in my language is called "sending yourself" Even on those few moments I was asked to go and herd cattle for one reason or another, I wanted to do it so well. I wanted the cattle to have "shiny bellies" proving that I chose the best part of pastures and I definitely went by the river for them to drink water and be full. Being defined as effective and efficient at the discharge of my allocated duties meant that I could continue to be given more tasks above my level and enjoy doing what other kids my age could not do. It was truly satisfying to be defined based on my capabilities.

There is a huge contrast between the definitions of others on my womanhood and those I created for myself. There are definitions that are so limiting and very narrow. A girl, a woman or a boy in a particular situation will be stuck in definitions they have no control over, and they end up living in poverty, in a child marriage and devastating conditions simply because how they were defined never showed the light of possibilities.

They do not see the possibilities because what was used to define them is something that they totally have no control over like hair in the arm pit, breasts on the chest, who tells those to grow!? What it means is that whatever I can become is left to the mercy of nature and community therefore the intangible and the course of life not within control and choices. On the other hand, definitions based on choices broaden perspective, nurture curiosity and puts a deep burden to do things outside scope thereby liberating even the biggest potential for a rape, a child marriage or extreme poverty.

Even in adulthood there are always attempts either very expressive or subtly that endeavour to define womanhood using narrow concepts of femininity and womanhood such as being beautiful, married, single mom, mother and many others. Those who do not fit into those definitions become labelled outposts, very difficult and in some cases rebellious. Definitions of being "difficult", "hard", "woman with balls" are meant to be the unpassable and unbroken stop signs for any woman who chooses to define herself and reclaim the power of defining things, boundaries and self.

I will end by saying that the power to define and who defines womanhood in society matters. It is where part of the struggle to extricate many has to start from. It begins from realising that everyone cherishes being recognised by what they are capable of, what they are able to defy and build from choices they make even from a tender age. Community, society or self-driven definitions of a human being based on some natural force brewed somewhere outside their choices and control is an injustice that has caused many to live in poverty and deplorable conditions simply because they were defined by hairs, acnes and breasts!





GENDER EQUALITY

Can Taxation make it a Reality?

By Lynette Hlatywayo

Introduction

Taxation and gender equality are critical issues in development. However, their relationship has not been adequately explored. A progressive taxation system can significantly make a shift in the realisation of gender equality and women's rights.

Without tax justice, governments will struggle to finance women's rights and meet their needs and aspirations so that they lead decent lives. Tax is the primary means by which governments raise revenue to fund essential public services, such as health and education, or to provide designed programmes that reflect the needs of women and girls, or to support the burden of care work with which women are disproportionately shouldered.

"Regressive" consumption tax impacts on women disproportionately, as women are more likely to be living on low incomes, or no incomes at all, and are mostly likely to be responsible for purchasing the daily necessities that attract value added tax (VAT).

Developing countries like Zimbabwe lose billions of dollars in public revenue every year through illicit financial flows, capital flight, tax evasion and tax avoidance by multinational corporations. In Zimbabwe where women constitute more than 52% of the total population, government is deprived of the much-needed resources to fund public services and critical sectors that advance the realisation of women's rights and gender equality especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gender Equality: Domestic and International Law

Gender Equality means that women and men have equal conditions for realising their full human rights and for contributing to, and benefiting from, economic, social, cultural and political processes and development.³ Zimbabwe has made commitments and ratified several regional and international laws which call for the promotion of women's rights and gender equality.

Some of the conventions and protocols that the country has ratified include the SADC Gender Protocol and the Beijing Platform for Action of 1995 which remains a landmark in fostering gender equality and protecting the rights of women. Also ratified was the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, a United Nations treaty signed in 1979, frequently described as an "international bill of human rights for women".

³ UNESCO, 2003

Furthermore, the Constitution of Zimbabwe which is the supreme law of the land also provides for the rights of women and measures that can be taken to ensure that the socioeconomic wellbeing of women is improved. In addition to Chapter 4 which sets out the Bill of Rights, Section 80 (1) explicitly provides that every woman has full and equal dignity of the person with men and this includes equal opportunities in political, economic and social activities. This was also complimented by the formulation of policies which seek to foster gender equality for instance the National Gender Policy.

Marginalized women and those living in poverty are impacted the most by tax injustice. Regressive taxation policies continue to have negative impacts on poor people, especially women. Besides, unpaid care and domestic work carried out by women without getting paid let alone recognized, due to tax dodging, governments are losing a lot of resources that could finance women rights with respect to the balance between direct and indirect taxes, there is some concern about the role of indirect taxation.

The Value Added Tax (VAT) and the 2% Intermediary Money Transfer Tax can exert a gender bias because of women's different consumption patterns. In the Zimbabwean context, women tend to purchase more goods and services that promote health, education and nutrition compared to men. This creates the potential for women to bear a larger VAT burden if the VAT system does not provide for exemptions, reduced rates or zero-rating. The same is applicable to ensuring a sufficiently high tax-free allowance for small entrepreneurs. More generally, because of women's lower income, a tax policy that solely focuses on increasing indirect taxes such as the VAT instead of also increasing direct taxes (income taxes) can potentially be more burdensome for women.

2021 National Budget as A Case Study: What does it offer for Women?

The 2021 National Budget was announced by the Minister responsible for Finance and Economic Development on the 24th of November 2020 amid a challenging and difficult socio-economic environment for most citizens particularly women experiencing the devastating impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic.

In an endeavour to mitigate and reduce its impacts, government was supposed to show commitment through the National Budget by allocating adequate resources towards critical sectors and use a gender lens in the design of stimuli packages to mitigate its impacts.

Instead, citizens have seen the enacting of a range of new tax measures by government to fund the ZWL\$421.6-billion-dollar budget yet at the same time giving meagre resources to critical sectors for effective public service delivery. Citizens particularly women in low-income earner bracket have no tax relief according to the 2021 National Budget.

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Women are already in low income, but they are being squeezed of the little income which they have. Small stalls at marketplaces are now being charged an equivalent of USD30 per month.

Consequently, women who run hair saloons will now pay \$ZWL2,500 per month. The important aspect is how the tax revenue could have been utilized to finance critical sectors that promote women socio-economic wellbeing.

The 2021 National Budget allocated ZWL2.2 million to the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community Small and Medium Enterprise Development. An amount of ZWL7 billion was set aside to support ongoing work at the Dams.

The Minister also acknowledged that COVID-19 exposed challenges in the health sector. However, despite the fact that it is women who are the most affected by poor services within this sector, there was no clear breakdown on how much has been allocated towards maternal health, sexual and reproductive, gender-based violence related services. These sectors must be sufficiently cushioned to ensure that women lead decent and prosperous lives.

On social protection, the Minister acknowledged the fact that the challenging environment facing the country has resulted in the number of vulnerable citizens increasing. It is applaudable that government allocated ZWL200 million towards sanitary wear for young girls. However, despite the resources being not enough, allocating resources is one thing and disbursing the resources to the respective line ministries on a timely manner is another thing. Worrying to note is that of the ZWL200 million earmarked towards sanitary wear in the 2020 National Budget, only ZWL\$58 million was disbursed according to the 2021 National Budget Statement leaving a lot of young girls vulnerable.

Policy Recommendations

- Implementation of a **Gender-responsive budget** (GRB) is essential both for gender justice and for fiscal justice.
- Mechanisms should be put in place to stop illicit financial flows, tax avoidance, tax evasion and other harmful tax practices that are perpetrated and biased towards, multinational corporations and the wealthy.
- Government should collect tax revenues in a progressive and gender-just manner, as a sustainable way to finance the commitments to end poverty and reduce inequality.
- In order to promote sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction, development efforts must ensure that policy interventions in the area of taxation do not negatively affect desired outcomes in the area of gender equality.

The Impact of COVID 19 on the Socio-Economic Wellbeing of Women

By Lynette Hlatywayo



Introduction

The year 2020 marking the 25th anniversary since the ratification of the Beijing Platform for Action of 1995 was intended to be the landmark celebrating the achievements of gender equality and women's rights, however, with the emergency of the COVID-19 pandemic in the first quarter of the year, even the little progress made over the last decades have been rolled backwards.

In the Zimbabwean context, despite existing international, regional and domestic progressive laws and legal frameworks which seek to foster gender equality and promote women's rights, their rights continue to be abrogated. The COVID-19 pandemic has further deepened and worsened the pre-existing inequalities exposing the vulnerable in social and economic structures.

Addressing the burden of Unpaid Care Work

There exists generally a gross imbalance in the gender distribution of unpaid care work between men and women. Before COVID-19 became a global crisis, women were doing three times as much unpaid care work and domestic work.

With the emergence of the pandemic, the increased demand for work is deepening the already pre-existing inequalities in the gender division of labor. The extent to which a country achieves its social and economic objectives rests not only on the amount of paid work done but also on the amount of the unpaid care work. However, in Zimbabwe it is worrying to note that this unpaid care work is not paid for by the government let alone recognized.

The less visible parts of the care economy are coming under the increasing strain but remain unaccounted for in the economic response. A more practical example would be that under normal scenarios, women and girls often do more than their fair share of unpaid care work, however, in a pandemic situation like the COVID-19 crisis, this share of unpaid care work is multiplied.

In Africa alone, women spent 40 billion hours alone every year walking in search for water.⁴ This is also supported by the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (UN MDGs) report of 2012 which stated that 71% of the burden of collecting water for household use falls on women and girls in Sub Saharan Africa. The above assertions remain true in Zimbabwe especially in most cities of the country where residents are experiencing acute water shortages and women who source water for the family have had to resort to community boreholes.

Besides long hours spent at these boreholes and some other shallow wells, women have also become vulnerable to abuse by male water point marshals that have self-claimed the responsibility of managing these water points and often forcing payment and sexual favours for access to the water which are primarily supposed to be free public services. This is also costly especially for poor women with multiple roles like taking care of their families.

Moreover, the time that they spend collecting water also deprives them from participating in economic governance processes. It is also women who go out of their way and subsidize for services that could have been provided for by the government in taking care of COVID-19 patients, self-isolating people, and children who remain at home. All this unpaid care fall more heavily on women because of the existing structural and patriarchal patterns within the society.

Addressing Gaps in the Public Health System

Another important dimension relates to the fact that health services have been repurposed and refurbished to target COVID-19 pandemic at the expense of other healthcare services. For instance, the provision of sexual and reproductive health services including maternal health care and gender-based violence related services are central to the health and wellbeing of women, yet they have gone beyond the reach of many women, the majority who are poor. This means that there has been an unintentional reduction in the provision of routine emergency medical care and facilities for non-COVID-19 cases in the country.

At most of the public hospitals across the country, the zone, which is set aside for non-COVID-19 cases, has since reached its capacity. Consequently, the dire scene where seven babies were stillborn in one night at Harare Central Hospital due to alleged negligence following the longstanding impasse between the government and medical practitioners is another cause for concern. The emergence of midwives in high density suburbs of Harare who help stranded women deliver in the midst of a strike by health practitioners brings to light the plight of Zimbabwean women.

Pregnant and breastfeeding women are also further exposed to the virus as they are excluded from the vaccination program. These are just but a few examples of the already existing inequalities that are being amplified by the crisis and will deepen further if not addressed. All this points to the fact that very little has been done by government to increase the capacity of the public health system. There is need for government to apply a gender lens through gender responsive budgeting and ensure that all critical sectors that advance the realization of women's rights particularly the health sector is sufficiently resourced.

Economic Recovery Plan

It is important to take into cognisance the fact that COVID-19 hit the country at a time when it was already grappling with deep macro-economic challenges. The two decades of economic downturn has seen the Zimbabwean economy shrinking drastically with most of the industries almost totally closed making the informal sector grow exponentially and said to be employing staggering 90% of the employed Zimbabwean population. Women constitute a larger proportion of this sector as vendors and cross border traders.

The total shutdown of this sector meant that women were being stripped off of their source of income and therefore struggling to put food on their tables and providing for their families. It is therefore critical that gender responsive economic and social policies are put in place in order to address the impacts of the pandemic hence the need for financial assistance and safeguarding mechanisms for the informal sector. It is high time for government to think out of the box and provide a tailor-made budget that will suit and be able to address the different and specific needs of women towards a post COVID-19 recovery plan and this can start with the realisation that the economy of Zimbabwe is mostly informal.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened and amplified all existing inequalities in the Zimbabwean context. Its devastating socio-economic impacts have created a national crisis, which requires a collective and genuine commitment in order to be addressed. However, the response whether at a national or local level will be significantly weakened if it doesn't factor in the different ways in which inequalities have made women more vulnerable.

A gender lens in the design of stimuli packages and social protection programs must be applied. A supplement budget will be able to address these gaps and ensure that all critical sectors that advance the realisation of women's rights and gender equality are sufficiently resourced. Placing women and young girls at the centre of the budgeting will fundamentally drive a more inclusive society and place the nation on a footing in making the Sustainable Development Goals a living reality.

Monitoring COVID-19 immunization responses around the world

By Felistus Sithole



As with any other infectious diseases that the world has faced in history, COVID-19 pandemic befell the world on the sunrise of 2020, with first cases discovered in China and quickly discovered in European states then later on the African continent. COVID-19 has proven to be one of the most contagious and deadly viruses – as recorded by number of new infections and deaths.

The world came to a halt as lockdowns became the order of the day. To fight against the social and economic effects of this pandemic, a large population of the world needs to be immune to the virus, this means that the safest way to achieve this is through a vaccine. Vaccines are a technology that humanity has often relied on in the past to bring down the death toll of infectious diseases. In less than a year since the pandemic, a number of research teams came up with vaccines that protect from virus that causes COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2).

After the development of the vaccine, the next challenge was the availability and fair distribution of the vaccine throughout the world. For efficacy, it is important that people in all nations receive the necessary protection, the immunization process should be for all countries, and everyone should come first not only those from the wealthy nations.

Despite the fact that enough vaccines have been administered to fully vaccinate about 5 per cent of the global population, the distribution system has been one-sided. As of 8 April 2021, 40 per cent of the COVID-19 vaccines administered globally had been distributed in 27 wealthy nations that represent 11 per cent of the global population. According to Bloomberg, the least-wealthy nations which make up 11 per cent had received just 1.6 per cent of COVID-19 vaccines administered by early April 2021.

Loosely translated this works out to wealthy nations vaccinating rate at 25 times faster than the least poor nations.

The US is targeting to vaccinate 75% of its population in the next three months. Meanwhile, nearly the world's half of countries still haven't reached 1 per cent of their populations. These calculations exclude more than 40 countries, mostly among the world's poorest, that don't yet have public vaccination data, these countries represent almost 8 per cent of the global population.

Globally, over 1,04 billion COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered which translates to 14 doses for every 100 people, marking a remarkable gap in vaccination roll-out programs in different countries. Leading on the vaccination list is Seychelles and Israel which have 56% fully vaccinated, UK and U.S have 19% and 29% fully vaccinated respectively. UAE third on the list has 10, 254,053 doses administered (Our World in Data).

By 21 April, China is reported to have administered more than 200 million doses of its locally produced COVID-19 vaccines. It has also supplied and or donated vaccines to poor nations.

Africa, which is the world's poorest continent, still has the least vaccinated. Out of the 54 countries, only three have inoculated more than 1 per cent of their populations. With 20 nations reported to not have started the vaccinations roll-out. As of 11 April 2021, 1.3% of Zimbabwe's population had been vaccinated earning it the third highest inoculation rate in the Southern African region, after Seychelles leading continentally with 65,6% and ESwatini with 1,75%. (<https://zimfact.org/is-zimbabwes-covid-19-vaccination-rate-among-the-highest-in-africa/>)⁵

The vaccination roll out has been met with mixed responses, with emerging reports of side effects after receiving the first jab, negative responses and non-uptake might increase. Chinese vaccine Sinovac on the spotlight for being less effective and China's Centre for Disease Control which is considering mixing vaccines and varying the sequence of doses to boost efficacy. 7.6 million people in Chile had received at least one dose of the Sinovac vaccine, but some vaccine recipients are reported to have fallen ill. Zimbabwe needs to improve on digitalizing the vaccination program for accurate statistics on the vaccine doses administered.



The Irish Times
The Wall Street Journal
<https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/daily-covid-19-vaccination-doses?tab=chart>
<https://zimfact.org/is-zimbabwes-covid-19-vaccination-rate-among-the-highest-in-africa/>
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/world/covid-vaccinations-tracker.html>
https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2021/04/21/China-COVID-vaccine-200-million-mark/4891619009590/

The **Auditor General's Report** provides a window through which citizens can see how public funds are used by public entities and constitutional entities. 2019 is closed.

WHERE IS

#2021AuditReport • #ReleaseITNow

ZIMCODD
ZIMBABWE COUNCIL ON DEBT AND DEVELOPMENT

Twitter: @zimcodd1 Facebook: Zimcodd Website: zimcodd.org

the Comptroller and Auditor-General, after examining the accounts transmitted to him or her in terms of section 35(6) and (7) of the Public Finance Management Act [Chapter 22:19], and the accounts of any public entity, designated corporate body or statutory fund, and after signing a certificate recording the result of his or her examination, shall—prepare and submit to the Minister, not later than the 30th of June in each year, a report on the outcome of his or her examination and audit of the accounts referred to him or her in terms of section 6 (1).

Specific to the issue at hand, the Auditor General, Mrs Mildred Chiri, should have submitted the 2019 Audit Report to the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Professor Mthuli Ncube before 30 June 2020. By the time of publication, it was already May 2021 and citizens are still unaware of how public funds were utilised during the 2019 financial year. According to the Auditor General's Office, the delayed release of the 2019 Audit Report is largely attributed to the COVID-19 induced lockdown which posed operational challenges in the collation and assessments of financial statements. According to Section 32 (3) (b) of the Public Finance Management Act, the Annual Auditor General's Report must present the state of affairs of every Ministry, public entity or constitutional entity, as the case may be. By May 2021; citizens were still unaware of the state of public finance management in public entities and constitutional entities.

Delayed release of the 2019 Audit Report: Implications on public sector governance

By *Angela Mandoreba*

Public sector auditing remains a foundation for the realisation of sound public sector governance. Through conducting factual and unbiased assessment of the public sector financial statements, public auditors especially Supreme Audit Institutions (Office of the Auditor General) assist public entities and other constitutional entities to promote good governance, public accountability, transparency, integrity, efficiency and effectiveness in all matters and decisions involving public funds. Above all, public sector auditing plays a crucial role in ascertaining whether public funds are being utilised for the attainment of set goals and objectives.

Despite the role of public sector auditing in curbing corruption through supporting the governance responsibilities of oversight institutions like the Parliament and other accountability institutions, it is worrying to note that to date, Zimbabweans have no sight of the 2019 Auditor General's Report. This however does not imply that the country does not have legal frameworks which contextualise the release of audit findings including when and how the report should be made public. Section 10 (1) (a) of the Audit Office Act stipulates that:

Why worry over the delay

The Auditor General's Report remains an important public accountability tool that should be accorded the value it deserves. The timing of the report is as important as the report itself. Further delay of the 2019 Audit Report undermines its essence because by 30 June 2021 the nation expects the Auditor General to submit the 2020 financial audit report to the Finance Minister. This clearly implies that the 2020 Audit Report will overtake and overshadow the 2019 Report findings. This has a negative bearing on the implementation of the Audit Findings by the responsible ministries, government departments and local authorities.

Zimbabwe's public finance management is characterised by perennial challenges including misappropriation of public funds, financial irregularities, unreconciled and unaccounted expenditure and lack of value for money in general. There is high likelihood that the financial irregularities and malpractices which occurred in 2019 have been repeated in the 2020 financial year and probably also in the current 2021 financial year. One of the major aims of the public audit is to detect cases of public finance mismanagement and proffer recommendations of addressing those anomalies. The anomalies in the 2019 financial year are not yet publicised and this is breeding ground for repeated cases of public financial misconduct. We are therefore calling upon the Auditor General to immediately publish the 2019 Audit findings without further delay.

The SEJA CORNER

The ZIMCODD has a network of Social Economic Justice Ambassadors (SEJAs) dotted around the country whose main thrust is to promote social and economic justice on issues that affect the common people. The SEJAs are part of ZIMCODD's strategy of mobilising a mass movement of community activists that are focused on issues of improved public resources management for the betterment of the economy and ensuring that there are people centric decisions on how resources are utilised. This corner is dedicated to share some of their views on ongoing issues.

Mhinduro

By Yeukai Munetsi

Arikuziva chokwadi hapana
Arikutaura chokwadi haachazivikanwi
Arikuvhunza ashaya mhinduro.

Ndiyo iripamuromo wemunhu wese
Ndiyo irimupfungwa dzemunhu wese
Asi wekuvhunza ashaikwa

Vamwe voti takaiwana kare misika
Vamwe voti yakapiwa vanhu riini?
Vamwe voti yakapuwa vanhu kupi?
Asi mhinduro anayo ashaikwa

Zvuyisa kupishana kwepfungwa
Zvuyisa kusava pachena
Zvuyisa zve mhirizhonga

Ruzhinji rwakatarisira ipapo
Vanorarama nehurema,vakadzi,vechidiki Kunyangwe vanasamusha
Nekuti ipapo ndopanaramo yavo.

Ndopaneyemitero,chikafu ,chikoro
Chikumbiro choenda kukanzuru

Kukumbira kuiswa pachena kwemafambiro emisika
Kukumbira hurongwa hwakakwana hwemisika
Kukumbira kujekeserwa wekubhadhara nekwekubhadarira misika
Kukumbira kujekeserwa vane kodzero yokuwana misika
Kukumbira kuenzaniswa kwemikana
Kukumbira kusatariswa kwevanezvkwama zvakazvimba kare
Ruzhinji ruchikwangaya

Zvobetsera kurerutsa humbavha
Kurerutsa chioko muhomwe
Kurerutsa kusayenzaniswa kweruzhinji
Kurerutsa mhirizhonga,bongozozo

Kugadzirisa raramo yevevuzhinji?
Mhinduro ruzhinji rwatarisira kwamuri Imi
Humba makombe, munogona
Tinokuzivai munogona

Tambiraiwo chichemo chevana venyu
Moitawo moyo wekubereka
Kuitira vana vagute
Musape dangwe refu rinosvikira kare
Muchinyima rugotwe,
Rugotwe runoda Kuchengerwa nemubereki.



Demand for transparency

By Yeukai Munetsi

Transparency leads to accountability
Accountability avoids vulnerability
Vulnerability promotes inequality
Inequality suppresses interests of the majority
Inequality breeds chaos and violence

Hence Gweru City Council (GCC) promote transparency
Transparency on the vending stalls
Transparency and equality on sharing the information
Transparency on the payment platforms and payment channels



GCC empower citizens by providing information through relevant and accessible means to all
Empower citizens by being transparent
Empower citizens by giving them equal opportunities
Empower citizens by giving them a decent living earned on sweat
Empower citizens by not discriminating based on gender, age, political affiliations and abilities
#promote transparency

SEJA views: Grave Concerns of the Vaccine and the Money

By: Yollander Millin

Zimbabweans have always struggled with the manner in which the public finance management has been ongoing. Disgruntled by the lack of public records on how public finances are expended and the opaqueness of the general procurement procedures, it is not surprising to have questions emerging in the case of the COVID-19 resources acquisition. The general public seems to be lacking confidence in the government in as far as decisions pertaining to the pandemic are concerned, and particularly now that there is the issue of the vaccine procurement.

Without the sought clarity on the source of the vaccine procurement funds, the population is left to wonder how much has actually been collected, used and where it is coming from. According to the Sunday Mail on 31st of January 2021, the government was said to have set aside 100 million United States dollars for the vaccines and procurement of around 20 million vaccine doses to immunize 60 percent of the population. There was however no breakdown of how the 100 million United States dollars was salvaged.



Given the fact that the tax payer will bear the burden of footing the costs for the vaccine, an exposure of existing inequalities comes to play as the burden of over taxation lies with the already poor. According to the Zimbabwean Mail of October 2018, the Zimbabwean Independent of December 2020 and Cite in January 2021, Zimbabweans are suffering immensely due to the ever-increasing taxes. Traders for example, have to pay presumptive tax, the 10% quantum, the duty and IMTT, that is already four taxes on a single entity. The tax burden is too high on the poor. "Zimbabwe's tax system is neither fair nor equitable, thus, it does not proffer social justice. Individuals are contributing even more through social contributions such as pensions, Aids levy, rural electrification levy among other indirect taxes," (News day, 2016). On the other hand, companies are offered tax holidays and incentives for purposes of attracting foreign direct investment, and this means no tax contribution towards the immediate rebuilding of economy. For example, the government of Zimbabwe on 31 January 2020 backdated a tax holiday for Huawei Technologies Co., Ltd, a leading global provider of information and communications technology infrastructure and smart devices. The tax holiday, enacted through Statutory Instrument 24 and 25 of 2020, follows value-added tax (VAT) and income tax concessions offered to the technology company in 2019. The Great Dyke project was also recently granted a five-year tax holiday through Statutory Instrument (SI) 26 of 2021. This would translate to the fact that the poor, through the taxes, would have the responsibility of procuring the vaccine that they will ironically only get access to in the second or third phase of the roll out plan.

Another aspect is the donations and grants that are given to the State. It is not clear or explained what happens in the event that a budget allocation has been made, or a fund set aside for the purchase of resources like PPEs, vaccines and syringes etc, then a donation of those materials is made. The existing question is on whether the allocation is diverted to other areas, and if so which ones in particular and what consultations are made prior to the diverting of the funds. For example, as stated above, 100 million dollars was set aside for the purchase of 20 million vaccines, and a pledge of 400 thousand was made by the Chinese government, how does that affect the 100 million set aside, is the monetary equivalent of the donated vaccines deducted and allocated to other needs? Other concerns are also centred on the administration costs for the vaccine. Yes, 100 million United States dollars was set aside to procure the vaccine, but how much is going to be needed to ensure that it (the vaccine) gets to even the people in the most marginalized communities? How much would be needed for the planning and training of the front-line workers both at national and provincial levels? How many workshops would have to be attended, by how many people, at which hotel facilities and how much would all that translate to.

In order for the people from all corners of Zimbabwe to have access to the vaccine in their communities, what are the logistical plans and how many cars will be needed, with the roads having been declared a national disaster, what plans have been made to cater for the storage of the vaccine while in transit, and how much would that be? Other things to consider would be the amount needed for supervision, monitoring and evaluation, information dissemination among other things. With the ultimate question being, where would the money come from?

Recommendations

- Ministry of Finance to allow Parliament to exercise its oversight role by presenting the issue for debate before making binding commitments
- Transparency in public finances is a must, the sources of resources and how they will be used should be recorded and made available for access by all
- A government publication on how COVID-19 resources are mobilized and how they are used to be released in real time
- A debt audit for Zimbabwe is a must. Zimbabweans need to know especially now, in COVID-19 times, how much is owed to whom, and when they are supposed to pay. This will help avoid pushing the country further into debt distress and help preserve the dignity of the citizens who already have the burden of financing the payment of existing loans and at the same time contributing to the funding of national welfare and public services through taxes.



ZIMCODD in Pictures



RIGHTS CONSCIOUSNESS AND SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY MONITORING TRAINING FOR SOCIAL NETWORKS - GOROMONZI



Women and Youth following Rights Consciousness and Social Accountability Workshop in Goromonzi



Figure 2 Climate Change and Cotton Farming Conference 2021



Figure 3 Climate Change and Cotton Farming Conference 2021



Figure 4 Gweru PFM Reform Indaba



ZIMCODD-AFRODAD Multi-Stakeholder Workshop on IMF Special Drawing Rights



Public Debt Management Dialogue Workshop

BreakFree



Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD)

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