



Investing In People For
Social And Economic Justice

BREAKFREE

The Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development Newsletter

2019 4th Edition

2019 IN RETROSPECT

As the curtain comes down on 2019 and we await the new year, it is critical for us to reflect on the path the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) trailed through the past 12 months. Year 2019 was indeed a mixed bag of fortunes for the majority of Zimbabweans. For the fortunate ones, it was a fruitful year where dreams and wishes were realised while in some quarters, 2019 presented dark moments when hopes and dreams were crushed. The country's political, social and economic spectrum was in the spotlight on a global scale with historic developments either positive or negative shaping social and economic justice discourse.

On the economic front, the year 2019 can be dubbed "a year of Statutory Instruments (SIs)" because of the introduction of consecutive regulatory SIs in a bid to stabilise the economy. Zimbabweans were made to experience the bitter taste of austerity measures introduced in the 2019 National Budget operationalized under the "Austerity for Prosperity" mantra. Historic hyperinflation, price hikes, fuel shortages rocked the country as citizens laid all the blame on austerity. The fuel price hikes and the intervention of Zimbabwe United Passenger Company (ZUPCO) who introduced low cost

bus services to cater for both urban and rural commuters drove the social media community into a frenzy where laughter and satire characterised the discourse signaling the people's frustrations brought by the ailing economy. In other words, 2019 was made unpopular and will be remembered in history for the austerity measures just like the infamous 1990-1995 period was made unpopular by the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) implemented without adequate social safety nets. The discourse around sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe by the United States of America (USA) and the European Union (EU) was also taken to another level as we witnessed the Southern African Development Community (SADC) declaring 25 October as an Anti-Sanctions Day, a solidarity day where SADC countries resolved to conduct various activities in their respective countries calling for the immediate removal of the sanctions on Zimbabwe. Despite all efforts the sanctions remained in place and we wait to see how the SADC countries will react in 2020.

Zimbabwe was rocked by massive power cuts in 2019 which brought a number of businesses to a standstill. As if the power cuts were not enough, the power utility went on to increase tariffs by 320%. The increase in tariffs was

meant to address the power crisis in the country but failed to do so with businesses bearing the brunt as they lost productive hours.

Amidst the economic turmoil Zimbabwe's public service delivery was not spared as it continued to deteriorate. Of note were the developments in the country's public health sector where the medical practitioners' strike due to incapacitation resulted in the dismissal of about 448 public hospital doctors after the strikes were ruled illegal by the government. The country saw the shutdown of an already dilapidated health system with fears of communicable disease outbreaks as the country experienced acute water shortages in most towns and cities.

The year 2019 will also be remembered for the devastating Cyclone Idai which left a trail of destruction and loss of human lives. Cyclone Idai struck Zimbabwe in March 2019, causing extensive damage while over 50,000 households were destroyed in the wake of the disaster. The flash floods and landslides triggered by the cyclone destroyed large tracts of fields in Zimbabwe's agricultural Manicaland and Masvingo provinces thereby threatening food security for an already burdened nation.



Pictures: Some of the socioeconomic woes that rocked Zimbabwe during the course of 2019
Source: Internet

MILESTONES

Despite all the political, economic and social ills that rocked the country this was indeed an eventful and busy year for ZIMCODD that saw the coalition engaging in a number of social and economic justice informed activities and initiatives. The organization catapulted the struggle against social and economic injustice in Zimbabwe through building citizen agency and policy advocacy. In all its efforts ZIMCODD is greatly indebted to its partners in their different capacities for the support rendered throughout 2019.

On matters of the “National Purse”

2019 was indeed a historic year for ZIMCODD as the coalition witnessed the government buying in to the call for a national debt audit. Zimbabwe is saddled with a public debt which is comprised of about US\$8 billion external debt and a staggering domestic debt estimated at ZWL\$8 billion as at end of September 2019. The period January to March 2019 saw ZIMCODD registering an assertive public debt campaign built on immense policy research and analysis, interface and awareness raising meetings complimented by substantial online activism. In the quest for debt justice, ZIMCODD infused debt talk in all the engagements it held with various stakeholders. The campaigns were meant to ensure that the government implements its commitment to conduct a national debt audit.

Despite Zimbabwe being in debt distress since 2000, there was no clear and sustainable debt resolution

strategy. Nevertheless, as a social and economic justice coalition, ZIMCODD could not just sit back and watch the country plunge into a worse debt crisis. In response to this gap, ZIMCODD came up with a debt resolution strategy named Sustainable and Inclusive Debt Management Framework for Zimbabwe (SIDMaF), a paper that followed wide research and consultations with various stakeholders. SIDMaF is a landmark publication for the coalition as ZIMCODD believes that it is a collective responsibility for all citizens in their different capacities to address the debt crisis. Parliament, central government, civil society, international financial institutions and private sector are equally important in resolving the current debt crisis and shaping a sustainable debt management framework going forward.

As ZIMCODD continued to steer its wheel towards sustainable public debt management in Zimbabwe, SIDMaF was complimented by roping in members of the fourth estate into the struggle through a dedicated journalist training on debt discourse. The training was born out of an understanding that media reporting on debt contraction and analysis is vital in raising informed voices and amplifying the demand for accountability among the citizenry. During the training, journalists were challenged to effectively discharge their watchdog role in ensuring that the government abides by the Constitutional provisions in as far as public finance management is concerned.



Picture: Brian Tamuka Kagoro speaks on prudent stewardship of public resources at the High-Level Debt Conference



Picture: Sakhile Sifelani Ngoma speaks on the effects of debt on women



Picture: ZIMCODD Executive Director, Ms. Janet Zhou popularizes SIDMaF on Capital FM with Conrad Mwanawasha



Picture: Priscilla Mushonga Mishairambwi at the launch of SIDMaF

ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE: TAKING WOMEN AND YOUTH ONBOARD



Pictures: Participants at the Economic Literacy Seminar and Social Networks Training

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

National economic governance issues have remained sacred to the better part of the society with women and youth being the most affected. This gap in information gave ZIMCODD an opportunity to embark on a massive empowerment programme for women and youth through conducting Economic Literacy Seminars in Kwekwe, rural Goromonzi and Seke to increase the knowledge of citizens through capacity building, knowledge transfer and information dissemination. The seminars are part of the coalitions' overall objective of strengthening transparency and accountability in public resource management through empowering citizens so that they play an oversight role and participate in economic governance.

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

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

IN QUEST FOR TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The manner in which public resources are managed or spent determines the course through which national development takes place. Discourse surrounding transparency and accountability in the utilisation and expenditure of public resources ruled the roost during ZIMCODD's 2019 programming period. This has seen the coalition embarking on massive campaign and awareness raising activities towards an effective and prudent stewardship of public resources. Zimbabwe's current socio-economic challenges have never been due to lack of policies or resources, rather the challenges stem from poor governance and lack of political will to implement progressive policies which ensure sustainable national development. A number of salient issues were brought forward during the coalition's activities whose focus was on public finance management including the need for deterrent measures against the abuse of public resources to ensure that duty bearers are guided by integrity,

transparency and accountability in handling public funds. In Zimbabwe, corruption is singled out as the major hindrance towards national development.

The successive Auditor General's Reports point out to corruption, rampant abuse and misappropriation of public funds, fiscal leakages, lack of transparency and accountability and continuous violation of legal and constitutional provisions guiding the management of the public funds. Consequently, the country is faced with macroeconomic challenges characterized by huge budget and current account deficits, declining economic growth rate, and unsustainable domestic and external debt. It is against this background that ZIMCODD rolled out massive campaigns for public finance management reforms to ensure transparency and accountability through increasing interaction between citizens and duty bearers who are the custodians of public funds. The campaigns done through

the holding of Public Finance Management Indabas and Constituency Indabas were born out of the realization that citizen agency is a vital cog towards the realization of transparency and accountability in public finance management.

It is ZIMCODD's belief that effective public finance management can translate to progressive realisation of citizens' social and economic rights and that we can play a big role in demanding for this. However, we struggle to break through the government's firewall of secrecy and lack of transparency, particularly as relating to public debt. Furthermore, citizens' voices are increasingly silenced by the shrinking civic and political space and government intensifying its heavy-handed approach to dealing with non-state actors exercising their constitutional rights.



Picture: Hon Felix Tapiwa Mhona speaking on the role of Parliament in PFM at an Indaba in Harare



Picture: Killer T performing at the Economic Consciousness for Development campaign (edutainment)



Picture: Hon Raj Modi (centre) following proceedings at PFM Reform Indaba in Bulawayo



Picture: Hon Temba Mliswa speaks on corruption at a Harare PFM Indaba in Harare



Picture: Participants at a Harare PFM Indaba in Harare



Picture: Hon Regai Tsunga (Left Corner) interfacing with Mutasa South Constituents

'POVERTY IN A SEA OF PLENTY', A TYPICAL CASE IN ZIMBABWE'S MINING HOST COMMUNITIES AS ZIMCODD SEEKS TO ENSURE COMMUNITIES BENEFIT FROM NATURAL RESOURCES IN THEIR AREAS



Pictures: Participants pose for a group photo at ZAMI



Picture: Iyasa group entertains participants at ZAMI



Zimbabwe's natural and mineral resource endowment is undoubtedly sufficient to resolve and address the socio-economic crises affecting the majority of the citizens. The Southern African country is rich in diamonds, platinum, gold, copper, timber and other precious minerals spread across the country. Nevertheless, what is most worrying is the fact that Zimbabwe which was once the breadbasket of Africa is now counted amongst the poorest countries in the world despite the existence of these minerals. What then is the cause of misery and suffering in a sea of plenty? Is it a case

of bad stewardship or that of mining laws and policies that prioritise large scale mining conglomerates at the expense of locals? In response to these questions, ZIMCODD has in 2019 partnered with like-minded organisations, the Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA) and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) to conduct District and Provincial Alternative Mining Indabas as well as the Zimbabwe Alternative Mining Indaba to discuss mining related issues.

The initiatives were born out of realisation that the locals are not deriving meaningful benefit from the miners extracted in their areas. Increasingly, communities have been exposed to mining risks and there have been incidents that shattered the trust between miners and local communities. Lack of mine closure, rehabilitation and open pits left by established mining companies have become a threat to both human and wildlife. Similarly, the illegal mining activities are also exposing communities to serious environmental risks. These practices occur due to the lack of law enforcement and flouting of laws and environmental management regulations. The platforms presented an opportunity for deeper reflections on challenges affecting mining communities in general and exploring opportunities for increasing transparency, shared value and genuine collaboration between mining companies, communities and government. The multiple stakeholders also discussed other emerging issues covering safety and health issues in mining, gender and extractives, tax justice, devolution, environmental rehabilitation, mining contracts transparency, mining and human rights as well as monitoring the activities of investors in Zimbabwe, among other issues.

The deliberations at the alternative Indabas made it evident that communities yearn for sustainable and increased value from the resources in their communities. While some mining companies have contributed through the provision of water, education and health facilities in their mining communities, other communities crave for sustainable and greater value realization from their mineral resources. More so, the participation of the communities within the mining value chain, forward, backward linkages and side way linkages need to be enhanced. Sustainable mining operations increase the participation of communities in mining, promote infrastructure sharing, enhance community mining enterprising, optimize use of mining claims (land), enhance and expand opportunities for women in mining, ensure rehabilitation of affected land and provide meaningful compensation to those negatively affected by mining.

INVESTING IN YOUTH FOR SOCIOECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

When talking about youth in Zimbabwe and beyond, it is critical to reflect on Rachel Jackson's words "Our youth are not failing the system; the system is failing our youth. Ironically, the very youth who are being treated the worst are the young people who are going to lead us out of this nightmare." This quotation is applicable to Zimbabwean youths who despite being the hardest hit by macroeconomic challenges ranging from high unemployment rate, insufficient political representation, to limited access to life opportunities in general continue to be left out on national issues. In Zimbabwe the participation of youth in economic governance processes remains appalling. The future of Zimbabwe lies in the young people of the land and it is crucial for the nation to invest in youths if economic revival and economic development is to be realised.

Youths in Zimbabwe have often been described as vulnerable to manipulation by politicians who continuously manipulate their disadvantaged economic status to settle their political scores. In a number of cases it is the youths who are driven into unleashing violence

towards opponents by political elites. According to the African Union (2011), the history of Africa as a continent on political engagement and participation in politics and governance is regrettably marred by predatory politics, with young people unwittingly conscripted into armed struggles, used to settle political scores and exposed to various negative media that erodes their positive heritage.

ZIMCODD's view of youth as critical agents for development resonates well with Hans Bernard's words "We all benefit by having young people exposed to the 'way things are done' in a democratic society. Isn't it time... to 'tap the power of youth'?" It is ZIMCODD's belief that if young people's potential and capabilities are harnessed in all earnest, young people in Zimbabwe have the potential to contribute meaningfully towards national development and it is high time youths are viewed as assets and not liabilities. In order to enlighten youths ZIMCODD engaged in youth empowerment programmes during the course of 2019. The coalition livened "Youth Hubs"; a safe platform for youth to cross-pollinate ideas on social and economic justice issues without the constraints and rules of public speaking or debates.

This was coupled by the tax justice dialogue meetings conducted with youth in the country's various provinces. Youth debates at both national and regional level were conducted to solicit their views on social and economic justice issues. The debates formed a part of ZIMCODD's strategy to improve economic literacy among students and to develop and facilitate the building of a vibrant movement for social and economic justice. The discourse on tax justice sought to empower youth with knowledge on issues to do with tax so that they are in a better and informed position to demand for transparency and accountability from duty bearers on how they are managing public funds.

Youth initiative projects were meant to encourage the youth to continue with their social accountability role as citizens rather than disassociating themselves from economic governance issues both at local and national level. Natural resources governance, tax justice, trade and investment and the devastating debt crisis formed the basis upon which engagements with youth were formed.



Picture: Youth pose for a group photo at a Youth Hub held in Harare



Picture: Youth debaters at the National Tertiary Institutions Debate Tournament



Picture: Youth at the Social & Economic Justice Academy in Kariba

ZIMCODD AS SAPSN SECRETARIAT



Pictures: Participants at the 2019 SADC People's Summit

Year 2019 saw ZIMCODD becoming host of the permanent Secretariat for the Southern Africa People's Solidarity Network (SAPSIN). SAPSN is a regional network of economic, environmental, social and political movements advocating for equity and justice in Southern Africa.

Mainstream and social media play an integral part in sustaining people to people movements. It is against this background that SAPSN Secretariat developed a communications strategy to increase media visibility of the network. The strategy was also developed with the aim of enhancing engagements with various social movements in the region. ZIMCODD took various initiatives informed by the communications strategy to popularise the movement through among other things, re-launching of the SAPSN website, Facebook page and Twitter handle. The secretariat has also produced various press statements on the various political and socioeconomic issues in the region attracting coverage from main stream media thereby increasing awareness and publicity on the issues of concern among citizens. Complimentary to the communications strategy, SAPSN Secretariat developed an Advocacy, Campaigns and Mobilisation Strategy focusing on expanding the SAPSN network to other SADC social movements whose work resonates well with SAPSN thematic areas of focus towards building a broad-based regional social movement in the quest for political, social, economic and environmental justice.

Despite the unfortunate events that unfolded during and after the 2019 Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) People's Summit which threatened the security of ZIMCODD staff and its members following unsubstantiated media claims by the Herald and the

subsequent articles by the Sunday Mail, The Patriot, Harare Post and Bulawayo24 News, the 2019 SADC People's Summit was a success as the delegation managed to produce and hand over the Communique carrying the SADC People's demands to the President of Tanzania, His Excellency John, P. Magufuli who took over the Chairmanship of SADC. The Summit was well attended as it managed to draw 847 participants from Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Issues discussed ranged from human rights and democracy, climate change, debt, inequality, poverty, gender and youth empowerment.

The SADC People's Summit is SAPSN's flagship event and it has turned out to be the prime annual space for various social movements to deliberate, exchange ideas and strategize on how to increase pressure on SADC and individual governments, international financial institutions, private companies and other power holders to be more responsive to the plight of the poor.

Participants at the People's Summit bemoaned the destruction of nature and natural resources base through extractivism and this was largely attributed to lack of transparency and socioeconomic and environmental accountability and disregard of legislation by players in the extractive industry at the expense of host communities. The situation affects men and women differently as poverty and inequality levels rise. It is against this background that the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) in collaboration with Oxfam West Africa, Norwegian People's Aid, Southern Africa Trust, Southern Africa Resource Watch, Fighting Inequality Alliance and SAPSN hosted a Pan African conference on Extractive Industries and Inequality as a post Summit event. The conference was held under the theme "Extractive Industries and Fighting Inequality: Exploring the linkages,

towards a more equal society". Participants critically analysed the positive and negative linkages between the extractive industry and the fight for equality and made policy recommendations on how the industry can better contribute to a more equal and just society.

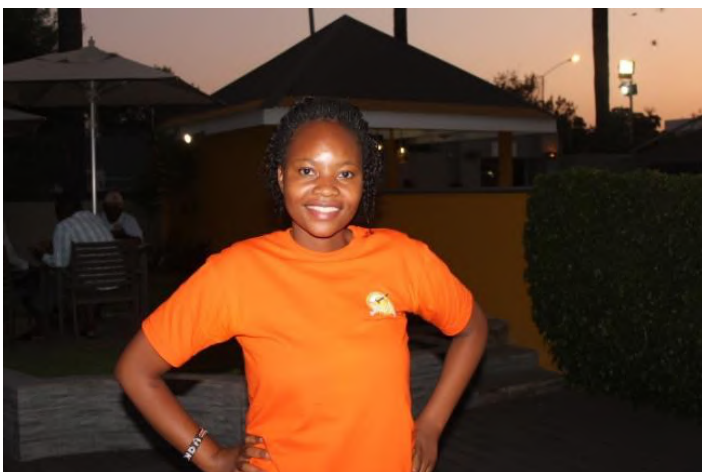
Meanwhile, ZIMCODD has also started working on the Regional Policy Alternatives Paper based on the demands from the People's Summit Communique. The Policy Paper which will be theme based and informed by thematic inputs from the various breakaway sessions conducted during the Summit, proffers solutions and alternatives to the issues raised during the Summit. The paper will inform the engagements to be done with the SADC leadership at both national and regional levels.

In a quest for inclusivity, SAPSN Secretariat commissioned a survey on the state of social movements in the region and it will inform the recruitment of more members targeting those SADC countries that have not been visibly active in the SAPSN space such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, Mauritius, Madagascar, Namibia and Botswana. This is meant to strengthen people-to people solidarity in addressing challenges in member states. The Secretariat therefore seeks to strengthen SAPSN at operational, leadership and structural levels to better respond, in a more inclusive manner, to key social, economic and political injustices.

Looking forward to productive 2020

As ZIMCODD moves on to 2020, the coalition looks forward to the new year with faith and hope for the better in the struggle against social and economic injustices bedeviling Zimbabwe. We might have challenges during the course of the year but our faith bids us hope.

2019 IN PICTURES



2019 IN PICTURES (CONTINUED)



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