

# BREAKFREE



The Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development Newsletter

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Investing in people for social and economic justice in Zimbabwe



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## Bulawayo residents reject Government proposal on RBZ debt

**By Lulu Brenda Harris**

BULAWAYO residents have vehemently declined to inherit the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) debt of \$1, 2 billion, saying citizens in the city are already over-burdened.

Presenting their views before a Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Finance and Economic Development at the Bulawayo Small City Hall, residents rejected the proposed RBZ Debt Assumption Bill saying the central bank should not be treated with kid's gloves.

The residents said RBZ should apologise to citizens for the "2009 mess" where the majority of the banking public lost their fortunes during the migration to the multi-currency regime after years of record inflation.

A resident, Prosper Chikomo said instead of paying the debt, the RBZ was better off

liquidated and the government should focus on creating a new central bank or rather pour the money into the ailing industries.

"This new bank should be taken seriously as well. We never benefitted anything from RBZ, the government should not take this debt," one resident only identified as Chikomo said.

He said in the event that government does assume this debt, then it should do so for every other struggling company in the country.

"We can't wake up and be told we must assist government to pay this when initially we were excluded from key decisions," said Chikomo.

The residents also claimed that it would be impulsive for the government to assume RBZ's debts, when it too was struggling to fund basic services and relied on taxpayers.

Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) member, Nokuthula Zondo, said fundraising for RBZ was absurd because Bulawayo was a dying city, with a constrained resource base.

"As the people of Bulawayo we don't want to pay this debt, we cannot afford it," said Zondo.

Nomalanga Ncube from ZIMCODD, said the RBZ Debt Assumption Bill should change its outlook, as it was biased, only focusing on corporates.

"Individuals and pensioners are not mentioned in this bill. It only prioritises paying corporates like the Bank of Malawi, what about us locals? The bill should serve locals first before anyone else. When this debt was incurred, people were suffering because it was at the height of the economic meltdown. The bill should address how livelihoods will improve this time around," she said.

A ZIMCODD Social and Economic Justice Ambassador (SEJA), Percy Mchiso said the tax payers were already burdened and it was incredulous for the government to impose more taxation.

"Instead the government should look at other alternative means of raising the money,

for example, targeting those companies that enjoy tax holidays," he said.

Morris Mpala, an official from a micro finance institution, stressed that the bill should allow for a thorough audit for both debtors and creditors. "What's done is done but let's fix it correctly and properly. Finances should be audited and RBZ should apologise to the people. The country's economy is based on the RBZ's vibrancy. The RBZ should be able to work independently," he said.

The government proposed to step in and assist RBZ as a way of capacitating the bank to maintain its status as lender of last resort.

The \$1, 2 billion debt was incurred after RBZ was involved in quasi-fiscal operations during the Zimbabwe dollar era. When the multi-currency regime came into effect, some creditors obtained writs of execution and attached the assets belonging to RBZ.

The government had to invoke the Presidential Powers (Temporary Measures) Act, to protect RBZ's assets from being attached by various creditors.

The bill has not yet been passed and the residents wait with bated breaths to see the government's reaction after the consultative meetings.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- Zimbabwe public and publicly guaranteed debt was estimated at US\$ 8.396 billion by December 2014.
- The composition of multilateral debt as at 31 December 2013-E.I.B (13%), AFDB (29%), IMF (6%), World Bank (49%) and others (3%).
- The 2015 national budget is \$4, 1 billion and according to the Minister of Finance 92.5% of government's revenue is spent on recurrent expenditure, with wages gobbling 81, 5% of income.
- As at September 2014 the PDL on a family of 5 stood at US\$502, 9.
- Between 2011 and 2014, 4,610 companies shut down and 55,443 workers lost their jobs
- According to the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency annual inflation shed 0,01 percent points on the November rate to minus 0,80 % in December 2014 .This means that prices, as measured by all items consumer index decreased by an average 0,80% in the last 12 months.

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# Norton residents thirst while their feet are in water



The collage shows the Honorable Member of Parliament, Christopher Mutsvangwa giving a presentation during the Norton Access to Water Campaign, seated to the left is the Council Chair and some of the participants who attended the meeting.

By Clarity Sibanda

The water crisis in Norton is threatening public health as people have resorted to digging shallow unprotected wells which are likely to cause disease outbreaks.

This was revealed by the residents of Norton on Thursday the 20th of November, during a community meeting dubbed, the Norton Access to Water Campaign which was organized by the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) and attended by residents, representatives from the Norton Town Council, Ward Councillors, the Member of

Parliament, Ambassador Chris Mutsvangwa and his wife Senator Monica Mutsvangwa.

The objective of the workshop was to map alternatives and find lasting solutions to the water crisis affecting the community. It was also a platform of engagement between residents and the policy makers through the organization's Cheuka, Look Back, Khangela Emuva platform, where communities get to engage their policy makers on critical issues affecting them.

The Chairperson of the Norton Town Council, Precious Mufahore hailed the

residents for attending the meeting and expressed the need for the coalition to continue organizing such meetings as they promote community participation and help them (Council) find solutions to the problems bedeviling the community.

The Chief Executive Officer of Norton Town Council, Mr W.N Muyambi said the rapidly growing population of the community which according to the 2012 population census stood at 67 591 was amongst the causes of the water crisis as the demand had now exceeded supply.

Muyambi said that less than 50 percent of the residents

receive water for at least 6 hours per day with the rest relying on alternative sources such as shallow wells which are prone to contamination, thus threatening the residents' health.

Responding to the question on how the water crisis was going to be addressed, Muyambi said an independent treatment plant for Norton would ease the crisis, since the Morton Jaffray Water works is owned by Harare, which in itself cannot sustain all the suburbs in the capital. Muyambi also called for partners to invest in the water project.

In his speech, Honourable

Mutsvangwa welcomed ZIMCODD 'stance in organizing the community meeting and urged participants that before year-end he was going to put in place the Norton Constituency Development Committee, a board that would steer development in the area.

"I want to urge the council through its various departments to work in one accord with the residents. I also pledge to work with the city fathers as we try to resolve the water woes. If we work harmoniously we can make Norton an industrial hub.

"The launch of the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) will

see companies investing in Norton and other surrounding areas. The Russian Chrome Great Dyke Project is set to create 20 000 jobs on its completion and in its initial stages it will employ 2000 people. This will not only resuscitate the ailing economy, but will also go a long way in creating thousands of jobs", added Mutsvangwa.

The council has of late come under the spotlight for unimproved water and sanitation delivery. Ellen Munangati from Norton's Ward 11 said they were going for days without water supply and their area had become a popular site of burst sewage pipes, with the council taking days to attend to the burst pipes, a scenario that has seen the break-out of diseases in the area.

However, there are some fortunate residents of Ward 5 and 6 that have uninterrupted water supply but as for the majority of the populace dry tapes have become a trend despite living next to Lake Chivero and Manyame Rivers.

Norton residents are indeed thirst while their feet are in water.

# Zimbabwe's tax framework explained

Masimba Manyanya and Tinashe Gumbo

The subject of taxation, the primary extractives industry in developing countries is complex. Taxation is an important source of public revenues in Zimbabwe; in 2014 it contributed more than 94 percent to the national budget revenues of almost \$4 billion in comparison with just under 6 percent from non-tax revenues. The impacts of taxation as a policy instrument are significant when this is underpinned by a framework of growth-focused fiscal, financial and monetary policies, as well as values of public accountability and transparency. Taxes are crucial to social and economic development as they reduce national dependence on foreign aid, which strengthens sovereign control over national resources and developmental processes.

Zimbabwe has immense natural wealth, particularly in mining and other extractive sectors. However, this wealth has benefitted the country's population marginally. This is mostly the result of the activities of Multinational Corporations (MNCs), which dominate the country's extractive industries. A research institute Afribiz lists

about 30 MNCs in Zimbabwe 2014, which are involved variously in insurance, petroleum products, mining and quarrying, non-metallic mineral products, finance, research and development, automobile trade and repair, wood and wood products, machinery and equipment, food, beverages and tobacco, forestry and fishing, chemicals and chemical products and wholesale trade. (<http://www.afribiz.info>). MNCs facilitate Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). In 1998 FDI inflows into Zimbabwe amounted to over \$400 million. By 2001, this had fallen to \$5.4 million, hence the need for domestic resources mobilization.

The roots of MNCs activities and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), particularly in mining and forestry in Zimbabwe are directly linked to the colonial era. Historically, the mining conglomerate Anglo-American of Zimbabwe (AMZIM), and the timber company Lonhro, have been the country's two largest investors. However, since the late 1990s these two corporations have reduced their presence in the country by more than 80 percent.



MNCs and their subsidiaries still retain a significant presence in the Zimbabwean economy, controlling more than 40 percent of national output, and contributing 20-30 percent of the national budget in corporate taxes and other obligations.

However, MNCs contributions to the national fiscus are negligible, in comparison to financial benefits they are reaping especially from the extractives sector through profits, as well as through tax evasion, tax avoidance and illicit outflows according to a report by the African Development Bank (AfDB) and Washington-based Global Financial Integrity in 2013. While gross annual earnings of MNCs in Zimbabwe tend to exceed \$2 billion annually since 1980, the country has also lost a cumulative US\$12 billion through illegal financial outflows ranging from secret financial deals, tax avoidance and illegal commercial

activities, (<http://nehandaradio.com>). MNCs also benefit as they manipulate loopholes in international regulations which, because of the structure of their operations for instance, allows them to avoid paying taxes to national authorities by shifting the profits they make to low-tax jurisdictions.

In spite of MNC contributions, Zimbabwe's tax systems remains regressive, crowding out incomes and consumption from among the poor, deepening poverty and widening income inequalities. Zimbabwe's indirect (population) taxes contribute upwards from 30 percent of national budget revenues the poor pay mostly from their meager.

Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe is on record stating that while Zimbabwe is gifted with immense natural resources especially in mining,

this wealth was being looted by MNCs. Officially launching the Chegutu-Mhondoro-Ngezi-Zvimba Community Share Ownership Trust in 2013, the President said significant natural resources have been exploited by foreigners while locals benefitted merely as labourers. During the time of looting, there were no meaningful returns especially to the communities the companies were operating in, leaving them to depend on charity and Government for their basic social needs. Foreigners were getting huge profit turnovers from minerals, forests, tourist facilities and wildlife while the indigenous people were benefitting nothing at all, something President Mugabe said must stop.

Zimbabwe is well-endowed with natural resources that are of a finite nature, particularly in the mining sector. These natural resources have over the years been exploited, largely for the benefit of MNCs and other foreign business entities. "The minerals, forests, tourist facilities and wildlife were generating huge profits for the foreigners while the local communities, in whose areas the resources are located, benefited merely as labourers. No meaningful revenue accrued to the local authorities

responsible in these areas, let alone to the vast majority who fall under the traditional leadership in the communal and resettlement areas. Consequently, communities have largely been dependent on Government and donor funding for their much needed social and economic infrastructure development," observed President Mugabe." (; ) <http://nehandaradio.com>

The extractives sector encompasses industrial processes that involve the extraction of raw materials from the earth, which are destined for direct or final consumption, or alternatively for further processing into manufactured goods. The extractive industry therefore involves the extraction of natural or primary elements from the earth through such activities as mining, dredging, and quarrying. Outputs of the extractives sectors are principally referred to as primary products, and examples include forestry products, minerals, metals, oil and gas. Typical of the beginning of most production processes, primary extraction is unique in economic production and distinct from secondary production. The historical progression of economies and societies depicts a cycle,

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## Zimbabwe's Tonga fishermen cut off from Zambezi lifeline

Adopted from Irin

BINGA, 29 September 2014 (IRIN) - The Tonga ethnic group, who make up the majority of the estimated 200,000 people living in rural Binga District in Zimbabwe's Matabeleland North Province, has for generations depended on fishing for food and an income. But unaffordable government levies are making their lives increasingly difficult.



The Tonga are struggling to compete with commercial fishers who can afford to pay levies

Binga District is too dry to make crop farming viable. The area is also under-developed despite being rich in mineral and timber resources. As a result, local communities look to the Zambezi River for fish - mostly bream and kapenta - for household consumption and sale to small-scale and commercial buyers from urban centres as far afield as Harare, more than 500km away. Income raised from the fish is used to buy other food items, in addition to paying for school fees and medical expenses.

The Tonga used to enjoy unlimited access to the Zambezi but this started changing about two decades ago when government departments - including the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority, local district councils and the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) - began charging levies to fish in the river. The fees at first were small and the authorities were not strict, but they have been increasing over the years, according to Kudakwashe Munsaka, director of Siabuwa

Development Trust, one of the few community-based organizations fighting to promote the welfare of the Tonga.

"For a long time, we have been lobbying government to develop our area, which is rich in natural resources. It is officially confirmed that there are good coal, gold, tantalite, uranium and diamond deposits and vast land under indigenous timber in this area but nothing is happening and we wonder why," said Munsaka.

"This leaves the Zambezi River as our only salvation... and there should be unhindered access to it, but the problem is that the Tonga people are now virtually barred from fishing from it because of prohibitive levies and this is driving poverty levels up. Instead, the river is now benefiting fishers and traders from the cities and towns who have the money to pay the levies."

Currently, anyone wishing to fish using nets or rods must pay US\$5 a day, while commercial fishers operating boats pay \$2,500 to the parks and wildlife authority every three months, \$350 to ZIMRA and \$40 per rig per year to the rural council.

Fishing on the Zambezi River is dominated by commercial fishers from urban areas who are charged the same levies as the locals but often sell their catch in towns and cities at higher prices.

### Unaffordable levies

"Where can the villagers get the \$5 a day to pay to fish when almost all of them are living on less than a dollar a day and are therefore extremely poor? What it means is that they have to resort to sneaking in to poach for fish or stay at home and starve," said Munsaka.

Lainah Dube of the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt

and Development (ZIMCODD), an NGO that promotes sustainable economic and social policies for local communities and is helping villagers in Binga to improve their livelihoods, said there was need for the authorities to revisit the amount of levies being charged. "We cannot afford them considering that our markets have been dwindling. It would help if locals pay less than outsiders," she told IRIN.

She added that the authorities had also limited the times during which fishers could cast their nets from between late afternoon to early morning. "This has compromised our production levels and we are feeling the brunt because we hardly have anything to take home," she said.

Those that are caught poaching often have to pay fines they cannot afford. The parks authority fines poachers \$20 while those with unlicensed boats are charged \$50.

### Corruption at play?

"The parks and council officials leave you to fish and, at the end of the day, take whatever you caught, saying you were poaching" Poaching has also given rise to corruption, according to Tracy Munenge, 34, a mother of two who belongs to the Zubo Balizwi Trust, a struggling women's fishing cooperative. "The parks and council officials leave you to fish and,

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## Binga fisherfolks engage policy makers



Binga rural livelihoods members

### Laina Dube

The Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) on the 22nd of October 2014 held an all stakeholders meeting at Binga's Tusimpe Pastoral Centre. The event was attended by 30 representatives drawn from National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority, Binga Rural District Council (BRDC), Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) and representatives from fishing cooperatives.

The objective of the meeting was to deliberate on challenges faced by the fish farmers in Binga and get responses from relevant authorities to map a way forward that will lead to livelihoods improvement. The meeting was also meant to promote dialogue between small-scale farmers and relevant authorities to get maximum gains and strengthen the determination of producers to stand up and demand their social and economic rights.

The Binga fishing cooperatives questioned why Parks and Wildlife outlaws the use of fishing hooks, which are cheaper compared to fishing nets. They also bemoaned lack of transparency by the National Parks officials and the police whom they accused of not giving them back their catch after paying fines. The fishermen further suggested that their boats must not be impounded upon arrest so that they are able to raise money to pay the fines.

Mr. Malunga from the National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority welcomed the mutual relationship, which has developed between the authority and the fisheries. The good relationship has seen the charges of fishing permits being reduced after cooperatives raised their concerns over high charges.

However, Mr Malunga ruled out the further reduction of permit charges from the current \$10 per month, arguing that each cooperative had 5 people, which when divided by 5 would mean that a member would have to fork out \$2 per month, which is reasonable.

Mr. Mwiinde from BRDC urged the attendants to attend the council's budget consultative meetings, a forum where they could object or embrace levy charges before they are implemented. On the issue of increasing fishing nets, Mr Mwiinde stated that the move was not sustainable considering the carrying capacity of the lake and urged the members to use resources with future generations in mind. He said each cooperative was allocated 5 fishing nets and had 5 members, which he said appeared adequate.

Cooperative members stressed the need for training to boost their knowledge on how cooperatives operate. It was resolved that the deliberations of the meeting be submitted to the local member of parliament so that he may take up policy issues such as dual licensing at a higher level. The cooperatives also requested training on marketing skills so that they can improve their business returns.

In its presentation on ZIMASSET, ZIMCODD called for a balance between social and economic justice with the laws of the land, the latter which must not be allowed to impede the former. The organization said the fish farmers had a right to work and earn a decent living as per the provisions of the constitution.

ZIMCODD's work in Binga started in 2013 when a fisheries chapter was launched. The members have been capacitated on issues of social and economic rights and unfair trade practices, the impact of ZIMCODD's awareness and empowerment work with the fisheries is already manifesting as seen by the positive engagements between the fisheries and government departments. The recent challenging of retrogressive by-laws and high levies is one indication of the fisheries' empowerment levels. In June - August 2014 they wrote letters to the Department of Parks and Wildlife Management highlighting challenges the fisheries were encountering and called for meetings with the relevant authorities in connection with the challenges, some of which have since been resolved.

## Zimbabwe's tax framework explained

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commencing with primary based economic societies, to the more advanced manufacturing-based societies which are characterized by high scales of value addition to primary products.

According to World Bank and United Nations estimates a high (more than 70%) and growing proportion of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$77608.74 billion and employment is associated with value adding, or manufacturing processes. Alternatively, primary sector employment is assuming a diminishing share of global employment. The world's poor nations critically depend on extractive or primary industries for their economic output and employment. In Africa, the primary sector accounts for more than 70 percent of economic output and employment. However, while the livelihoods of millions on the continent often hinge on low wage regimes found in extractive industries, the primary sector

is also the domain of large MNCs investments. As a result of capital constraints investors in poor countries are invariably foreign based. However, the dominance by MNCs in agriculture, forestry, mining and other extractive industries poses critical implications for state tax policies, and prospects for development policies that promote income redistribution, poverty alleviation and economic growth in the different countries.

The livelihoods of more than two thirds of the world's population hinge on and are directly affected by primary extraction. In the SADC agriculture employs almost 50 percent of the total population of the region compared to large-scale production of (high-value) manufactured products. While mining employs 5 percent of the population it contributes 60 percent to the foreign exchange earnings, 10 percent of the GDP, and about 15 percent of state budgetary

revenues in the region. In SADC, tax is particularly complex as it affects matters of development policy, public governance and population welfare. States depend on public taxes for their national budgets. But while low domestic resource potentials in poor countries raise the prospect of high taxation levels, high tax levels on the other hand militate against investment, incomes and welfare.

Through its Tax Advocacy Campaigns, ZIMCODD is playing a major role in strengthening the capacity of civil society to understand and analyze issues relevant to tax, as well as in developing advocacy strategies for tax justice and engage in tax research in Zimbabwe. ZIMCODD seeks to empower civil society to actively plan and undertake different advocacy activities, such as lobbying, campaigning and media work, and to learn from the experience of other countries. Stimulating public interest in tax issues is a major challenge in its own right. This is because while taxation is a

public policy as well as human rights issue, affecting the population in often adverse ways, taxation also tends to be presented as a highly technical subject, often dominating limited discussion circles of financial analysts, economists, academics, and public officials.

ZIMCODD acknowledges its task in terms of breaking down communication barriers through systematic tax literacy programmes, which seek to simplify the concept to make it an issue relevant for popular discussion and advocacy. ZIMCODD has also impacted on policy processes through for instance the significant public discourse it organized round the Income Tax bill in 2013. Through Tax Justice Campaign, ZIMCODD is helping establish a strong, broader and effective tax base and tax system, as well as strong local financial system. This will underpin expanding domestic revenues, growing public services, sustainable growth, broad based ownership as well as public



## Zimbabwe's Tonga fishermen cut off from Zambezi lifeline

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at the end of the day, take whatever you caught, saying you were poaching. They even follow the villagers to the local shops where they will be selling their fish and take them away," Munenge told IRIN.

Caroline Washaya-Moyo, a spokesperson with Zimbabwe's Parks and Wildlife Management Authority, insisted that wardens from her department were not corrupt and told IRIN: "We have always heard these complaints about the Tonga people being alienated from the Zambezi River, but we are operating within our mandate."

She added that the levies would stay as they were a means of discouraging uncontrolled fishing that might lead to the depletion of fish or the extinction of some types of water life.

However, John Robertson, an economist, said the local authorities, ZIMRA and the parks authority were using the levies to boost their small budgets. "All these departments are operating on shoe-string budgets and they are just too happy to descend on the fishers to raise income for their own use," he told IRIN.

Fishing cooperatives struggle to survive. The Zubo fishing cooperative started in 2011 with funding from UN Women but, according to Munenge, since some of the original members left and levies have increased every year, it is no longer viable. "At the beginning, things worked out well. There were 10 of us and two men who worked as captains. We used to share profits at the end of every month and managed to pay the levies. Only five are left now but, even then, we are not operating the rig because we are in arrears," she said.

She added that scores of other villagers had joined fishing cooperatives in an attempt to pool resources for the payment of levies, but all of them were struggling or had folded and that many were now resorting to poaching while others had turned to craft making for a living - weaving baskets or making furniture from the timber that is abundant in the district. But such ventures are still small-scale due to the lack of access to finance.

Salani Nyirenda, 69, a village head from Binga South, who remembers a time when the Tonga people had unfettered access to the river, said:

"Government must allow us complete freedom to fish from the river. We must also be allowed to set up vegetable gardens along the river and there is need for irrigation schemes along the Zambezi. We would use the vegetables to feed our families and sell to the towns and cities. There is so much poverty here."

He said national parks authorities had banned them from setting up gardens along the river.

Francis Mukora of the Zimbabwe Community Development Trust (ZCDT), an NGO that campaigns for members of disadvantaged communities, said while the authorities were acting within the law by imposing levies, preventing the Tonga from fishing the Zambezi contradicted government policy to empower its citizens.

"This limits these communities' access to their major source of income and fuels poverty and food insecurity while depriving them of highly nutritional but affordable food. While other people have been given farms [through the land reform programme], people from Binga must be empowered

## MUSHROOM Planting, the way to go



Article contributed by Simukai Goromonzi Trust CBO

The Goromonzi Rural District Council's decision to continue selling rural land to urban stands worsens the economic situation for the local communities. More rural people are being crowded into small uneconomic plots as the rich and property investors who already own rural and urban properties in different parts of the country take over. In the context of growing economic hardships in rural areas, mushrooms are increasingly becoming not just a source of nutritious food or medicine, but an important source of employment and incomes for rural households in Goromonzi.

Faced with these challenges, the community started income generating projects such as mushroom growing for survival. They also formed Simukai Rural Residents Trust, as a platform of engaging local authorities on the land issue. One of the departments of Simukai is Mutsamvi Project, headed by Anne Mavere. Anne's work involves encouraging women and youths to start income generating projects, starting with the resources they 'have in their hands' (whatever capital, resources, or ideas) to beat the quickest path out of poverty. Anne has been farming mushrooms for more than 10 years now, and she has managed to make a predictable income flow that supports her family of 7.

The mushroom industry has established itself firmly as a viable, prospective source of employment and income for rural households in Chinyika communal area, Goromonzi. Mushroom production hinges on appropriate investment and business activity levels, requisite management and training support services; participation of intended beneficiaries, (especially in the case of a community project).

### WHAT ARE MUSHROOMS?

Mushrooms are fleshy growths of fungus that are used in foods throughout the world. The mushroom industry in Zimbabwe is dominated by large scale producers who produce around 75% of the annual production. The remaining 25% comes from small scale producers who are mostly family owned businesses located around the country's major cities.

Among the most popular of the different types of mushrooms that are used in foods in Zimbabwe are white mushrooms, [morels](#), [truffles](#) and [portabella mushrooms](#). [Other popular types include the chanterelle, shiitake, oyster and enoki.](#) [The most common type of mushroom in many grocery stores is the Agaricus bisporus. This is white or light brown and has many common names, such as a white mushroom, table mushroom, Italian mushroom or white button.](#) [This mushroom has a stalk, a dome-shaped top and a generally mild taste. White mushrooms are available fresh, dried or canned.](#) [Morels are cone-shaped mushrooms which vary in color from tan to brown. Unlike white mushrooms, which have a smoother surface, morels have a porous, sponge-like appearance above the stalk. They also have a stronger flavor, which has been described as earthy, smoky or even nutty.](#) [These mushrooms typically are more expensive than white mushrooms. When harvested from the wild, they should be cleaned thoroughly because of their porous surface.](#)

Mushrooms are recommended as a healthy vegetarian food with strong medicinal properties.

### ORGANISING A SMALL MUSHROOM FARMING BUSINESS

The mushroom industry in Zimbabwe is lucrative, with potentially high returns in excess of 80% of investment. But its principal characteristics are its high risk levels. A successful mushroom project carries management systems that minimize risks of loss to 5% of opening stock. This means investing in state of the art building structures and systems, ventilation systems, space, feeding, watering, cleaning and appropriate de-toxication regimes. Furthermore an investment into essential capital stock, professional on and off-site training at all levels that is project production, marketing personnel and office administrators is key. Under-capitalisation at the onset can be a recipe for disaster. This implies the need for compulsory training program for all involved.

Mushroom production is also about volumes. Small volumes mean small incomes. High volumes with good management mean good rewards. An analysis of the market for mushrooms shows that Harare consumes more than \$500 000 in value of mushrooms every month.

One standard small mushroom business project will be based on a basic grass thatched structure (for ventilation and disease control/prevention) occupying ground space measuring 12 metres by 8 meters. Initial project costs are estimated at \$200.00. Project Inputs include Mushroom seeds, JIK, 100m x 150m plastic tubing, Wheat straw, Panets, vinor rape/clean rapes, cement, labor. A mushroom business critically depends on water. Through Mutsamvi Project, Simukai small producers in Goromonzi mobilised resources and have since engaged the Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA) for water provision in the village.

### BUSINESS EXTENSION ADVICE

Simukai will assist anyone willing to start a mushroom project. We now have information in booklet form, and can visit project areas to help start up a new project, provide project supervision where necessary, or do crisis interventions, e.g. following disease outbreaks. Our engagements are strictly formal according to Simukai admin protocols, and our chief contact is Anne Mavere on 0772857239, [annemavere@gmail.com](mailto:annemavere@gmail.com), or [Masimba Manyanya \(0777559368\) manyanyaj@gmail.com](mailto:Masimba Manyanya (0777559368) manyanyaj@gmail.com), [simukaigoromonzi@gmail.com](mailto:simukaigoromonzi@gmail.com)

## ZIMCODD holds national high schools debate



### Precious Luphahla

The inaugural Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) National High Schools Debate and Public Speaking Gala was held on the 20th of September 2014 at Mzilikazi High School in Bulawayo and a total of 76 participants attended the event with eight schools participating in the competitions.

The objectives of the debate were to raise awareness and popularise constitutional provisions on social and economic rights and good economic governance among the citizenry, raise economic literacy of students, teachers and citizens to fully participate and demand space in policy making processes and facilitate the building and mobilisation of sustainable campaigns for decent human development.

These regional debate galas held in Harare and Bulawayo earlier in the year were instrumental to the success of the national debate gala.

Through debate and public speaking, ZIMCODD seeks to encourage research and the growth of a concerned citizenry among the students, teachers and the community as a whole. Armed with these skills and knowledge the community would be enriched with the knowledge on constitutional, social and economic rights as well as a critical understanding of government policy, debt management and illicit outflows.

In his closing remarks, ZIMCODD Southern Region Chairperson Mr. Liberty Bhebhe commended the organisation for hosting such a historic event and called on the students to make the most

of the acquired knowledge in their struggle for social and economic justice.

ZIMCODD launched the High Schools debates in 2010 and these have been turned into an annual event. The coalition aims to have a wider reach than the traditional competing schools and from 2015 and beyond would be extended to marginalized areas in the organisation's regions of operation.

### The following is a list of prize winners

#### Debate Category

##### Position

1. Sizane High School
2. Queen Elizabeth School
3. Founders High School

#### Public Speaking

##### Position

1. **Ntombiyomusa Ndlovu**  
(Mzilikazi High School)
2. **Tariro Mzwazwa**  
(John Tallach High School)
3. **Nyasha Dingiswayo**  
Cranborne Boys High School