



# ZIMFORUM SPEAKS

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## Zim Social Forum a Success...

**By Simbarashe Mutizwa**

The seventh edition of the Zimbabwe Social Forum that was held in Harare on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> December was no doubt an open political space where local social movements, NGOs and other likeminded organization met to reflect and map out alternatives to current dominant neo liberal paradigm and corporate-led globalization process. The forum which was officially opened by the ZIMCODD Chairperson for the Southern Region Mr. Percy Mciyo, brought together essential players from different clusters so as to raise pertinent issues directly and indirectly affecting them notably in their social and economic clusters. "Stakeholders deliberate on

pertinent issues which affect them. Examples are deindustrialization, unemployment, high cost of living, discrimination, and endemic poverty. We must come up with solutions and alternative resolutions," said Mciyo. He highlighted that the social movements were meeting at a critical time after the July election and also noted the significance of the country's adoption of a new constitution creating hopes for a better commitment to address important problems facing the country. "Our role is to point out the problems, come up with our resolutions, direct and advice government on matters that we think are progressive for social development particularly when we are

coming from holding election and adopting a new constitution", said Mciyo. Mciyo said this year's Social Forum and ten year commemoration placed a significant responsibility Zimbabwean especially those responding to the theme "reclaiming the social movements' agenda for social and economic justice". He concluded by highlighting that the Zimbabwe Social Forum has emerged as possibly the broadest based and potent network of movements for social-economic justice in Zimbabwe in a context where most NGOs and networks have focused largely on the political and civil rights aspects of the struggle.



## Unjust conditions for cotton growers!



**By Simbarashe Mutizwa**

Farmers who attended the National Resources, Governance, Land, Environment and Climate Justice Cluster expressed concern over harsh and unfair conditions that they encounter. Cotton growers from Gokwe alleged that conditions which they were operating under were restrictive and unfriendly as they are made to sign contract forms that they are not familiar with without an opportunity to understand the contents as the majority of the famers are elderly and unable to read or write.

A majority of the cotton growers in Gokwe are facing unjust conditions of selling their crop at a low price and the delay in receiving crop inputs which hold up progressive development said Mr. Gwekwerere a cotton grower from Gokwe. "A larger number of cotton growers in Gokwe are facing a challenge of unfair treatment in terms of the delay of receiving crop inputs and also they are made to sell their crop at a low price.

"most of cotton growers in Gokwe are the elderly and

unable to read, they are being made to sign contracts that they do not understand and not familiar with and as a result they are unable to engage with other buyers", said Gwekwerere.

The displacement of people from Chiyadzwa area for diamond mining by mining companies also was a subject of concern as cluster members pointed out that this procedure was causing environmental damages to the land as people have to crowd on a small piece of land.

Masimba Manyanya who was part of the resources, land,

environment and climate justice activists said that people living in the mining areas were living under a risk after being displaced to small areas that cannot capacitate the numbers of the families.

"The displacement of the people in Chiyadzwa is indeed an environmental concern which needs urgent attention; these people are overcrowded in small pieces of land.

"We want to equalize human survival and seek for urgent solutions to address challenges for people living in mining areas particularly those in diamond and gold mining areas as they are affected by chemicals from mines," said Manyanya.

The activists noted that the quality of water in areas like Gokwe, Chisumbanje, Chiyadzwa and Zvishavane is not afe for the people in those areas as the water is alleged to be harmful because it now contains toxic chemicals from mineral washes from mines.

The cluster strongly recommended that citizens should be lead agents in taking responsibilities for the environment and allied natural resources and not just leave this in the hands of the government.

## Education under fire from Commercialization.

**By Funny Hudzerema**

Commercialization of the education sector took centre stage at the Zimbabwe Social Forum.

Student activist, Avoid Masiraha argued that commercialization of the Zimbabwean education sector was triggered by sentiments rooted in neo-liberalism driving most service providers to treat it as a business and consequently ignoring the fact that this was a fundamental right.

The cluster discussion converged on the fact that Education was now classified as a business characterized by unaffordable fees, mushrooming of private schools and unaffordable levies. The state was being forced to abandon its role as service provider and succumbing to pressure from privatization pressure groups and institutions.

One University of Zimbabwe based activist, Sokis, pointed out that teachers were badly paid because owners were now focusing on making profit.

The cluster deliberations were poignant when it came to marshalling arguments that commercialization was now being supported by the government which students were alleging was not prioritizing education as an important foundation for developing the nation.

The cluster recommended that the Government must in its budget allocation and commitments set aside funds for the education sector and pay teachers better salaries. Students were entitled to grants and these should be guaranteed by government.

The cluster members warned that education provision was reproducing inequalities last seen under colonialism through the bottleneck approach where only a few accessed school.

Further, the cluster deliberations encouraged citizens to fight for their rights and confront the institutions and practices that were causing the poverty which was now endemic in the nation.

# Informal Sector Lambasts Government



**By Cedric Ndoro**

Various informal trader organisations and activists lambasted government for its neglect and failure to support the increasingly crucial sector of the economy.

Speaking at the Zimbabwe Social Forum, Simba from the Zimbabwe Chamber of the Informal Economy expressed disgruntlement at what he termed the inhuman social, economic and legislative environment in which traders were operating in.

“Government must give us operational space and not just regulated operational space, but regulated operational space with market value and adequate sanitation. We want authorities to engage people on the ground before and during the policy formulation process,” said Simba.

Informal traders expressed unhappiness and concern at the recent reports coming out in media that government intends to implement laws that will see informal traders being charged value added

tax citing inadequate consultations with the sector, lack of knowledge on the vat process and failure to allocate competitive working space by government.

Alternative Business Alliance representative Melody Nemaire took a swipe at bylaws that she claimed were from a colonial inherited structure that meant to discriminate against the black majority.

“We cannot continue to be governed by colonial laws when our livelihoods are

dependent on street vending; this hawker's license is not an empowering option at all. The public continue to fall victim to cheap propaganda about possible health issues yet we source our products from healthy environments. The products are then disposed of in unhygienic conditions because the state has failed to guarantee access to safe water and waste disposal facilities are literally non-existent,” said Nemaire.

Traders decried the constant harassment they face at the

hands of national police and municipal police accusing them of using inhuman tactics of arrest and theft disguised as confiscation of their wares. They accused the Zimbabwe revenue authority of practices that were ridden with discrepancies at the various border posts as traders lamented the difference in duty charges and lack of clarity on duty paying products accusing customs officials of abusing the vague system to their advantage.

Shungu Matesanwa, a trade information desk officer assisting informal Traders at the Chirundu border post, the COMESA Simplified Trade Regime should be providing government with an easy way out.

“Government must ensure that laws passed are being adhered to and ZIMRA schedules of goods and tariffs/duties must be displayed on billboards at all border posts. We should not be haggling over the prevailing tariffs, duty calculating methods and duty exempted goods if this is done,” said Matesanwa.

The informal traders expressed intent to take their plight right to the ministry requesting an autonomous ministry to solely deal with informal traders as opposed to the current ministerial structure that encompasses small and medium enterprises and co-operative development, which they allege is to the benefit of the more established medium enterprises.

According to Zimstat, the informal sector was contributing about 20% to the GDP of the Zimbabwean economy that translated to about \$1.73 billion.

## The Zimbabwe Social Forum a resounding success



Hopewell Gumbo



Thomas Deve



Emmanuel Gasa giving a solidarity message

**By Clarity Sibanda**

The Zimbabwe Social Forum held its 7<sup>th</sup> edition at the Raylton Sports Club in Harare on the 14<sup>th</sup> December under the theme, “Reclaiming the Social Movements Agenda for Social and Economic Justice: Our Resources, Our Future”.

The Conference opening session featured solidarity speeches from cluster representatives while social and economic justice activists Thomas Deve and Hopewell Gumbo chronicled the path the forum has been on in the SADC, Africa and World platforms in the last decade.

All urged allied movement rallying around the Secretariat at the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) to remain resilient in the quest for social and economic justice.

Participants attending the Forum were drawn from local social movements, NGOs, and other like-minded organizations from all over the country spread across the Arts and Culture, Debt and

Trade, Democracy and Rights, Disability, Gender and Women Rights, Health, Labor, Media, Natural Resources Governance; Land, Environment, and Climate Justice; Social Service Delivery, Students and Youths, Disability clusters.

Cluster leaders presented their solidarity messages and challenged the status quo of abject poverty, which manifests itself through several but linked variables of gender inequality, high level corruption, indebtedness and skewed international trade policies, social insecurity, violence, bad governance and the HIV/AIDS pandemic among others.

The Social Forum was launched in Zimbabwe on the 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> of October 2003 at the Harare Gardens under the theme, “A People's Forum on Peace, Reconstruction and Prosperity in Zimbabwe,” and has been developed to an annual event that is building on a series of mobilizations and related activities that are taking their own shape in the spirit solidarity.

## Trade Unionists call for new reforms



**By Clarity Sibanda**

The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Union has pledged to fight against globalization which is the highest level of colonialism meant to place the country's resources in the hands of Multinational Corporations.

Representing the labour cluster Charles Mbwandarikwa during the solidarity messages session, he highlighted that they were battling against Zimbabwe's companies retrenchment exercises that were seeing hundreds of workers per week being thrown on the streets.

This phenomenon has not only exacerbated poverty but has increased the unemployment levels to way above 80%. In this respect, he

argued that the Government has the mandate to redress matters by developing policies meant to stop the rampant looting of resources by MNCs and the elite. This will stop a situation where future generations will be caught in the oppression web either as poor workers of the oppressive system or as citizens of a highly indebted country because of neo-liberal policies pushed by the globalization trends.

The solidarity message highlighted that Zimbabwe was endowed with vast natural resources where only the elites are benefitting since transparency and accountability levels are very low making his cluster put forward demands for curbing corruption and equitable

distribution of the country's resources regardless of one's creed, colour or political affiliation as the democratization of control in the means of production will help in achieving decent wages that will enhance in the betterment of local communities.

“Reclaiming the Social Movements Agenda for Social and Economic Justice was this year's theme for 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the ZSF. The social forum was inaugurated in Zimbabwe on the 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> October 2003 and is an open political space where local social movements, NGOs and other like-minded organizations meet, reflect and map out alternatives to the current dominant neo-liberal paradigm and corporate-led globalization processes.

## Poor Social Service Delivery endemic in Zimbabwe

President too busy to attend to student's issues



### Farlon Mukombe

Harare metropolitan residents led cluster activities at the recently held Zimbabwe Social Forum where participants took a swipe at authorities who are mired in bad governance and signified by poor social service delivery in the country.

Residents were represented notably by associations, like Combined Residents Harare Association (CHRA), Chitungwiza Residents Association (CRA), Harare Residents Trust (HRT), Epworth District Association (EDA) and Harare Residents Alliance (HRA).

They argued that Water, which is a source of life, has become a very scarce commodity in Harare metropolitan with only two hundred to four hundred mega

litres of water being pumped from the required six hundred mega litres which needs at least a hundred thousand dollars to purify per day.

It was pointed out that Harare has become the dry city and to the despair of many residents the city council is on a mission to install prepaid meters and privatize water, which the residents of Harare metropolitan say are not practical remedies as these turn water into a commodity, making it accessible to the rich and very expensive to the poor. The cluster deliberations highlighted that the city council has currently been charging residents very high water bills for the water, which is never there. Consequently, the privatization initiatives were not a practical solution and receiving a lot of

resistance from the residents who were chanting No to Prepaid meters.

It emerged in the cluster, that while the unavailability of water affects many people, it is the disabled who are affected most because of lack of infrastructure that is inclusive of their needs. A resident of Epworth highlighted how society has become so insensitive towards the disabled as they force them to fetch water from the boreholes where they queue and compete with the able bodied people that often get water first before them.

It was pointed out that Health care facilities cannot function without water. The shortage of water in government hospitals has resulted in patients being asked to bring their own water and cluster participants

wanted to know what was the role of their so called MPs in this context when the people are suffering while they slumber in luxury and comfort. Many other issues were raised on how service delivery in the country was deteriorating and the leadership was unaccountable. Some areas have not received water for the past five years with residents digging wells that have unsafe water.

Other issues highlighted were related to shelter.

“Why should they allocate stands to us, only to demolish later them because they are on wet lands for example? Why give us the stands in the first place?” said Masimba Manyanya a water activist from Goromonzi.

A number of areas needing urgent attention were identified and solutions proposed.

The first resolution was on prepaid metres. These should not be installed as they will make water inaccessible to the poor majority.

Urban transportation should be affordable people should not be charged exorbitant prices for short distances.

The government should undertake pro-poor housing schemes and in the current context, senior citizens should have their debts cancelled unconditionally.

Finally, it was recommended that women should occupy leadership positions to discuss water issues as they are the ones who are largely affected.



### By Portia Sigauke

The student union bodies yesterday gathered at the 7th edition of the Zimbabwe Social Forum with a call for His Excellence, who is also the chancellor of all universities President Robert Mugabe to step down from the chancellor position as he appears to be too busy to attend to problems that affect students at tertiary institutions.

There stressed the need for the government to look at the tuition fees that students are paying at public tertiary institution as there are being commercialized making the live of the students more difficult.

“We need a chancellor who is not the president, someone who can address challenges that we are facing rather than a man who is always busy with national duties”, they said. There also said that the government, must be clear on

the issue of grants and loans for the students and completely depoliticize the national policies that are meant to benefit young people from politics.

There added that student bodies should not be run by politicians which of late has led to the disintegration of student union bodies. There also said that the government should look at the future prospects of youth as the current situation in the employment sector looks gloomy.

Student bodies that attended the workshop include ZINASU, among others and it was held under the theme “Reclaiming the Social Movement Agenda for the Social and Economic Justice” Our resources – Our future. Artists including Madiz, Lady Squanda and Victor Kunonga provided entertainment

# Our Environment, Our Responsibility.

### By Pretty Chavango

Land and Natural Resources Governance was analyzed as part of the various discussions which took place at the Zimbabwe Social Forum that was recently held in Harare at the Raylton Sports Club.

Simba Manyanya one of the lead resource persons in the cluster deliberations pointed out that movements present here should struggle to sensitize society on issues to do with natural resources and educate citizens on what was deemed essential for each and every individuals to contribute meaningfully in conserving our environment.

The cluster deliberations pointed out human made characteristics of climate change and highlighted that these seem to have been more devastating as they are spurred by greed and unsustainable consumption patterns.

There was sensitization on the need to desist from careless littering with some cluster

members urging the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) to strengthen laws against such practices as people tend to throw away rubbish from moving vehicles etc disregarding the safety issues involved assuming that some of the motorists are driving behind, or the damage to the environment if the matter is not bio degradable.

The cluster raised matters of recycling waste and gains society might make from halting the careless littering. People were encouraged to recycle waste rather than complain of erratic refuse collection, reiterating the point that – look at the solution not the problem.

Within the cluster, the plight of cotton farmers and those displaced by mining ventures was a major issue of concern.

Affected cotton farmers called for the need to be free from contract farming arguing that they needed protection from the market forces that had

tended to be very exploitative. In this respect, it was felt that the government should undertake outreach programmes to educate farmers on their rights and outline possible dangers as taking into account the testimonies from those who were no longer in open and free farming arrangements.

On the extractive industries, the cluster called on the state to really articulate the benefits of the indigenization programme and expressed concern over practical issues related to foreigners benefitting more from local minerals. The cluster condemned the export orientation of industry where Zimbabweans continue to export raw minerals at a cheaper price and in return get fleeced again when finished products are imported into country.

Cluster called on the government to think seriously of value addition and beneficiation programmes

instead of communities that are left to just admire valueless gullies and deep gorges. They highlighted the need to develop refineries in the country so as to keep resources at home and get more benefits from processing them.

The issue of relocations was highlighted as one phenomenon leading to loss of livelihoods. Local people are susceptible to being relocated from their homes if they were deemed to be resident in places identified as resource rich and often get resettled on infertile rocky places with some being located near game parks where they are exposed to wild animals. The participants also claimed that not enough attention was being paid to infrastructure which they argued should be set up before people are relocated. Some called for the respect of proper traditional leadership to those displaced.

The issue of literacy on laws arose as it was argued that



Simba Manyanya one of the lead resource persons

there is need for simplification of laws and engagement of citizens as the ordinary person is usually the most affected.

The cluster finally recommended that the entities represented must advance their struggle through active

strategy and advocacy, community study groups and active participation in decision making structures. It was underlined that one needed to “Be a responsible citizen before looking at the government!”

## Privatization violating right to Health

**Varaidzo Chirambadare**

“Penga murwere penga!” was the slogan of the day at the recently held Zimbabwe Social Forum health cluster deliberations led by the Aids and Arts Foundation (TAAF) executive director Emmanuel Gasa, where people living with HIV and AIDS from all walks of gathered to air their grievances and offer alternatives.

According to article 76 (Right to health) of the new Constitution of Zimbabwe, “Every citizen and permanent resident of Zimbabwe has the right to have access to basic health-care services, including reproductive health-care services. Every person living with a chronic illness has the right to have access to basic health-care services for the illness. No person may be refused emergency medical treatment in any health-care institution. The state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within the limits of the resources available to it, to achieve the progressive realization of the rights set out in this section.” Unfortunately this is only on paper argued activists at the health cluster.

The issue of privatization of health services was top of the list during the discussion where they all agreed that the motive for privatization was profit meaning that the general public will not be able to afford medical facilities.

They noted that the government hospitals apparently are only screening patients for HIV related diseases such as cervical cancer and then sending them to private hospitals for treatment where it was clear that the majority of these patients cannot afford to pay private hospital bills.

The cluster activists pointed out that there was no privacy at most of the hospitals. Counseling

in some cases was being done in groups hence patients do not feel free to open up. In extreme cases, authorities were not sensitive to these and even located the Opportunistic Infections clinics close to the mortuary and that was affecting people psychologically because it was as though they were being wished dead.

Some noted that most people seeking help were not being schooled on the side effects of medication they were taking and the health care givers are violating their rights as patients.

People living with HIV/AIDS want to be consulted because they are the main players in the management of HIV and AIDS and they want meaningful involvement in health care center committees.

They demanded that Government must prioritize the provision of quality services characterized by ease accessibility to health care centers, availability of medication and committed healthcare providers willing to engage those with queries. They proposed that instead of buying new equipment for already established hospitals, they should now buy more medical supplies and electrify rural hospitals. It was also felt that time had come for them to digitalize all OI clinics to avoid defaulters and at the same time have HIV positive people at the OI's because they understood the needs of their peers.

The cluster also indicated that the Basic Education Assistance Module was operating in a partisan and unfair mode. They recommended that BEAM selection committees should be run by teachers and not politicians who are allegedly corrupting the system.



## Artistes Rock Forum

**By Funny Hudzerema**

This year's 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the Zimbabwe Social Forum was commemorated in an artistic style with diverse genres of artistes ranging from Zimdancehall flavor in the form of lady Squander, rhumba Madiz, dendera with Trason Chimbetu, traditional Afro jazz music with Victor Kunonga, a play by Savanna Arts and poets like Mbizvo Chirasha rallying behind the social movements bid to build a national solidarity network around social, political and economic justice, fight against discrimination and other social problems of the local communities of Zimbabwe.

Squander the “queen” of Zimdancehall kept the crowd

on their feet with songs such as Rudo and Mahwindi clearly putting on the agenda the struggles of combi transport operators and their touts. Lady Squander working with backing vocalist Darulo said she was inspired to do song because of the police brutality targeted at touts in the combi transport industry.

The Savanna Arts crew put out an educational drama which touched on bad service provision and clear failures of ZESA for electricity, ZINWA for water and other government institutions that have failed to arrest the increasing unemployment and poverty.

The artists called on all to resist prepaid meters being proposed by the City of Harare for

example and condemned the other initiatives in the energy sector.

Chirasha who put out inspiring pan African poetry covered matters related to abortion, HIV and AIDS and cultural imperialism.

The forum gave artists a rare opportunity to be part of a struggle where they had rights and obligations to speak not only through their performances but also through participating in clusters of interest to them as forum sought to reclaim the social and economic justice agenda for social movements.

## Democracy, myth or reality?

**By Pretty Chavango**

Running under the theme, “Reclaiming the social moments, Agenda for social and economic justice: our resources our future,” the seventh edition of the Zimbabwe Social Forum was organized under the clusters covering Health, HIV and AIDS, Arts and Culture, Gender and women's rights, Labour, Students and Youth, Land and Natural Resources Governance, Debt and Trade, Social service delivery, Democracy and rights and Disability cluster among others.

The democracy and rights forum focused on what democracy is and how it applies to our everyday life, under the theme, “Rethinking democracy in times of neo-colonialism and neo-liberalism”. It was established that many talk of democracy yet a few knew what it is all about and what effect it has on their day to day life.

Democracy was defined as rule of the people by the people, and was unanimously agreed to be a theoretical term which is not practical in reality. Gift Mwonzora, a student activists argued that we claim to practice democracy but act in ways



**Sekai Holland, a Senator for Harare Metropolitan**

that contradict what is written and articulated as law.

He further argued that while the right to health is guaranteed in the constitution, hospitals are being privatized and failing to guarantee health as a right. In this respect, the cluster called for wider circulation of simplified versions of the constitution so that ordinary persons can see the guarantees, and see resources clauses.

It was agreed that Democracy is not delivering satisfactorily in Zimbabwe and there was a need to depoliticize a lot of spheres.

Sekai Holland, a Senator for Harare Metropolitan argued that lack of grass root initiatives hinder the practice of democracy as people are not involved in the decision making process.

She urged all to note that Democracy works were people who are in leadership work with the common people and given Zimbabwe's challenges, the formation of peace movements in society were essential in order to dismantle for example the prevailing fear factors among people when it came to advocacy for their rights.

As a way forward the civil society was challenged to address issues of corruption, as well as advocate for the translation of the constitution into different languages as well as its simplification so that all citizens of Zimbabwe can be informed on laws governing their land as to effectively practice participatory democracy.

## Government must support arts

**By Portia Sigauke**

Artists from all walks of life thronged the Raylton Sports Club in Harare at a workshop organized by the Zimbabwe Social Forum with a call for government to support arts and culture industry like any other sector.

They bemoaned government for not including their welfare in the national budget which is killing their livelihoods as there have families to fend for.

“As artists we need that special recognition like any other sector and the issue of paying artists royalties should be at the heart of government but however there is no sign of it”, said Dereck Mpfu.

They said that there are organizing awareness campaigns on the national policy and laws that govern arts in Zimbabwe so that the government realize their potential in economic development.

There also called upon stakeholders within the industry to promote their talent rather than exploit them



**Victor Kunonga, Anti-Poverty Campaigner**

as the current situation speak with artists not being paid their dues on time and the need to be treated as professionals.

“all that we want is for the government to look at the issue of policies that govern arts and as artists we need to be treated equal especially with international artists that come to this country as we are all professionals in this industry”.

There also stressed the need to create artistic unions that seek to protect artist from

exploitation and push forward the interest of them to the governing bodies.

This year's 7<sup>th</sup> edition workshop was attended by other unions including the labor union, student unions among others and it was held under theme “Reclaiming the Social Movement Agenda for the Social and Economic Justice” Our resources –Our future. Artists including Madiz, Lady Squanda and Victor Kunonga provided entertainment.