



*Investing in People for Social & Economic Justice*

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **CORONAVIRUS- ZIMBABWE STATE OF PREPAREDNESS**

The Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) applauds the government of Zimbabwe for providing leadership in response to coronavirus (COVID-19) that has been declared pandemic by the World Health Organisation. The postponement, curtailment and cancellation of public events, gatherings and activities; and sufficiently equipping all health centres in the country among other interventions as enunciated by His Excellency President Emmerson Mnangagwa will indeed go a long way in preventing the spread of the life-threatening virus in Zimbabwe if implemented efficiently and effectively. As a development partner and a think tank on social and economic justice in Zimbabwe, ZIMCODD is committing to joining hands with other stakeholders in the fight against the pandemic COVID-19.

#### **Insights**

- The commitment to develop and implement a comprehensive response strategy is a welcome development. This strategy should be a living and reference document that must be implemented in letter and spirit. ZIMCODD is however concerned about the comprehensiveness of this strategy considering that there is no National Response Plan which ideally should part of the broad strategy. Thus, the government must expedite the development of the National Response Plan with a clear accountability and responsibility structure.
- Considering the state of the country's public health system, citizens' right to health is under threat. It is therefore our hope that Zimbabwe will remain within the "Green category" in this crisis. This should therefore be a wake-up call for government to upgrade the general health infrastructure necessary to promote, protect and respect the right to health which is a key ingredient in national development.
- Pursuant to the setting up of a Special Fund to deal with the pandemic, ZIMCODD strongly believes in the need for a dedicated and sustainable Disaster Risk Reduction Fund to mitigate any forms of sporadic outbreaks of pandemics and other natural and man-made disasters.

#### **Transparency and accountability key in the fight against coronavirus**

In the face of a looming life-threatening coronavirus, transparency and accountability forms the basis upon which this "war" can be won. This involves public disclosure of the ultimate sources of revenue (tax and non-tax revenue and funds from local, bilateral, international and multilateral partners), allocations and expenditures to allow for checks and balances. This

comes at the backdrop of the rampant abuse, diversion and misuse of public funds in Zimbabwe as highlighted in the successive Auditor General's Reports. In view of the alleged abuse of resources meant for assisting victims of Cyclone Idai there is need to employ stringent mechanisms to combat abuse, diversion and other forms of leakages.

The fight against coronavirus will of course involve immense procurement of kits and other accessories for screening, handling, testing and treatment of the virus. The bulk of the resource leakages from the public coffers are evident in public procurement due to noncompliance of public procurement procedures, regulations and rules. Precautionary measures must be taken to guard against 'tenderpreneurship' in which some individuals and companies win government tenders without going through the open contracting processes as provided for in Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act of 2017. 'Tenderpreneurship' has become a conduit of siphoning resources from the public purse as with repeated cases of unsupported expenditures and payment of goods not delivered. Vivid memories of the Zimbabwe Power Company scandal in which a payment of US\$4.9 million was paid to Pito Investments for transformers never delivered dating as far back as 2010 as revealed in the [2018 Auditor General's Report](#). Of interest to note in the same report is the case of Air Zimbabwe which was implicated in gross financial malpractices which included failure to account for 3 MA60 air crafts, unsupported expenditure amounting to US\$1.8 billion, no supporting documents to support the use of US\$655 thousand, no supporting documentation for operating expenses amounting to \$13.7 million and unexplained variances of \$87 million from amounts confirmed by suppliers.

### **Additional action steps**

ZIMCODD is therefore recommending that the government of Zimbabwe undertake the following;

- Develop a standardized approach and methodology for tracking expenditures for COVID-19 including for Research and Development.
- Develop and implement a systematic monitoring framework for development assistance and domestic resources spent on the fight against coronavirus.
- Respect and implement the provisions of the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act of 2017.
- Disclose sources of revenue (tax and non-tax revenue and funds from local, bilateral, international and multilateral partners), allocations and expenditures to the public on a weekly basis.
- The government must empower the Competition and Tariff Commission and the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe to ensure that suppliers of equipment and other medical necessities in the fight against the coronavirus do not profiteer from the crisis at the expense of the general public already wallowing in abject poverty. This entails ensuring that prices are benchmarked against prevailing prices in the region.

- The government through the Standards Association of Zimbabwe must ensure quality checks on the medical equipment and necessities in the wake of an influx of new products in the market.
- Strengthen oversight and anticorruption agencies to mitigate against the abuse of public resources meant for fighting coronavirus including but not limited to the Parliament of Zimbabwe, Procurement Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (PRAZ), Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) and the Competition Tariff Commission.
- This is high time the Tripartite Negotiating Forum (TNF) is energised to consider the implications of the pandemic on labour amid fears that the virus spreads faster in public places, work places included. Given that the majority of workers have no provision to work remotely, their right to health is threatened. As a matter of urgency, the TNF must expeditiously put in place a framework that ensures the protection of the workers' right to health in the face of the pandemic.
- The setting up of the National Communications Task Force is a welcome development that should also be expedited to ensure the dissemination of real time, accurate and reliable information on the state of coronavirus at national level through various communication channels. This will go a long way in allaying fears of the impending peril and building public confidence on the readiness of government to deal with the crisis.

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