



Investing In People For Social And Economic Justice

# BREAKFREE

The Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development Newsletter

2020 1st Edition



## The Editor

**W**e welcome you to the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development's 2020 First Quarter newsletter and thank you for pausing your busy day to read through. We started the year jubilantly as 2020 marks the coalition's transition from being a "teenager to an adult" celebrating 20 years of advocating for citizens' social and economic rights. However, the quarter did not end well as the nation and the world at large was and is greatly disturbed by the ravaging COVID-19 pandemic and we continue hoping for the best for Zimbabwe and the whole world. Nevertheless, it will be an injustice for one to talk about ZIMCODD's first quarter without mentioning the campaign against inequality undertaken during this period. Discourse around inequality dominate this publication as ZIMCODD joined the global protest against inequality to denounce inequality in its various forms.



International Women's Day

#EachforEqual



## COVID-19 not just a health issue

by Angellah Mandoreba, Tafadzwa Chikumbu, Muchanyara Midzi and Lynette Hladywayo

**W**hilst coronavirus can be regarded entirely as a health issue, it is also critical for us to look at the financial implications that comes along fighting the virus. The fight against coronavirus involves mobilisation and utilisation of huge sums of money drawn from the "national purse".

On 17 March 2020, the President of Zimbabwe, Emmerson D. Mnangagwa declared coronavirus a national disaster to allow for the government to mobilise resources and take necessary measures in dealing with the pandemic. The President indicated that resources originally earmarked for the postponed national events and celebrations including the National Independence Day and the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF) will be redirected towards strengthening defences against coronavirus.

Acknowledging the huge contribution from development partners and private sector in augmenting government efforts, the stewardship over such resources is as important as the resources themselves. It is therefore imperative that during this planning and preparatory phase that a clear Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Management Framework underpinned on transparency and accountability is put in place to ensure effective and prudent use of public funds in the fight against the pandemic corona virus.

## Transparency and Accountability key in the fight against coronavirus

**I**n 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 (including 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 2018 Auditor General's Report. The fight against coronavirus will of course involve immense procurement of testing 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, 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.

## Recommendations

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

1. Develop a standardized approach and methodology for tracking expenditures for COVID-19 including for Research and Development.
2. Develop and implement a systematic monitoring framework for development assistance and domestic resources spent on the fight against coronavirus.
3. Respect and implement the provisions of the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act of 2017
4. 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.
5. Beneficial ownership disclosure as an integral process of the tendering and procurement process is also important.

## COVID-19: Zimbabwe's Vulnerability

by Tafadzwa Chikumbu and Angellah Mandoreba

It is indisputable that coronavirus is a global health hazard that has claimed over twenty-three thousand lives, according to Worldometer [1], the majority of which from the global power houses such as China, Italy Spain, France and the United States of America. Whilst the pandemic remains a global threat with such alarming deaths, Zimbabweans have every reason to worry. It is no secret that the public health system in Zimbabwe increases the country's vulnerability to the deadly virus.

It is regrettable that the outbreak is coming amidst dilapidated and obsolete health infrastructure, unavailability of basic medical supplies and demotivated health practitioners. The longstanding impasse between the government and medical practitioners concerning the later's conditions of service further exacerbate the country's vulnerability to the pandemic. This is the most difficult moment for Zimbabwe, despite the commitment from the highest office in the land to reallocate resources towards fighting the pandemic considering that constant water supply is a key requirement yet there are alarming water shortages in urban areas. With the COVID-19 crisis, chances are high that the country goes in lockdown and the million-dollar question remains; how will people survive with dry taps?

## Public Mistrust - The biggest elephant in the room



Public mistrust has reached shocking levels in Zimbabwe to the extent that citizens always react otherwise even on noble government interventions. The trust deficit in Zimbabwe cuts across, social, economic and political spheres unfortunately. The underlying question remains, what went wrong? There is a general mistrust of the government emanating from misinformation on public media regarding the state of preparedness and management of public resources allocated towards fighting the pandemic (both tax and non-tax revenue including pledges and donations).

Public mistrust is not a new phenomenon in Zimbabwe. It is always true that people's expectations are shaped by the history. Public finance management in Zimbabwe is shrouded in secrecy and mystery and this has been the elephant in the room for so many years. The US\$15 billion lost from Chiadzwa diamonds remains unresolved, the public debt figures, how debt resources have been utilised and how much was allocated towards Cyclone Idai remains a public secret. The variances in reporting of aid from China in 2019 is a case in point where the Chinese Officials had to come in and set the record straight following under reporting by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development in the 2020 National budget.

Citizens strongly feel that the government has not been sincere in its communication on issues of national importance and national emergencies. The greatest fear during this pandemic is the fact that voluntary testing for coronavirus will remain a challenge as confirmed by a series of incidences where the government had to use unconventional means to hunt down victims of corona virus. It is frightening that if not addressed, the trust deficit may impede the efforts towards arresting the pandemic.

## Is it too late to rebuild the Public trust?

Whilst there might be other reasons for public mistrust, Ragnar E. Lofstedt believes that the public mistrust is attributed to the government's impartiality, incompetence and inefficiency. It is therefore government's responsibility to prove otherwise by undertaking the following;

**1** Provide timely, reliable and up to date information Transparency and accountability remain an important ingredient for restoring public trust and public disclosure always signal that government has nothing to hide concerning resource mobilisation, allocation and utilisation. To be effective, public statements regarding the pandemic must always be comprehensive, credible and sincere. In the absence of public information disclosure, social media will rule the roost and people will always assume the worst.

**2** Creating a conducive environment for collaborations between government, private sector and civil society organisations. The newly established taskforce should not just be limited to cabinet Ministers. It is incomplete in the absence of private sector players and representatives from the civil society, development partners and religious leaders. Greater collaborations across sectors has the multiplier effect of restoring public trust and confidence in the government.

**3** Building stronger accountability structures Government should make a deliberate decision to set up an accountability taskforce that ensure that all the resources allocated towards COVID-19 are properly recorded and accounted for. This will go a long way in tacking pilferage and abuse of public resources which has previously manifested in public finance management in Zimbabwe.



## COVID-19 Zimbabwe Lockdown - Humanitarian and Livelihoods Concern

As the global health crisis deepens with coronavirus continually ravaging the world, it is quite obvious that the crisis will spell short and long term impact on the global economy COVID-19 poses an existential threat and its implications on developing countries are devastating. At the moment, the world's attention has all been shifted to fighting against the life-threatening virus and Zimbabwe is not an exception. With only 9 confirmed cases and one death in Zimbabwe as at 2 April 2020, the lockdown is necessary for Zimbabwe considering the country's state of health systems which are ill equipped to cope with the pandemic. Despite poor healthcare system, poor water and sanitation systems, food insecurity are also causes for concern.

## Lockdown: What plans are in place to cater for the vulnerable?

At this critical moment in time, it is imperative to remind the responsible authorities that as the country gears up for the fight against COVID-19, there is an urgent need to protect the rights of the poor and the most vulnerable especially those families and individuals that continue to rely on social welfare programmes such as health and food schemes. The country remains in a fragile state when it comes to food security. The Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC) estimates that 5.5 million people, 38 percent of the rural population, is currently food insecure whilst urban food insecurity is now affecting 2.2 million people. The issue of maize imports from as far as Uganda seem to be on hold, but the provision of food handouts to the poor and vulnerable should remain on the priority list amid the fight against the pandemic.

Whilst the lockdown is necessary to curtail the spread of COVID-19, citizens registered mixed feelings on the effectiveness of the lockdown considering the state of public service delivery in most parts of the country where the majority of citizens, for instance, rely on community boreholes and the concern is around the need for social distancing. Concern has also been raised on the social well-being of citizens whose survival is pinned on the informal sector surviving on a hand to mouth basis and the lockdown means these operations are not feasible, so how are these families going to survive? However, the Minister of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services, Honourable Senator Monica Mutsvangwa allayed such fears by announcing that the Social Welfare Department has been instructed to cater for

vulnerable groups. Ironically, the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare is not even part of the Inter-Ministerial Taskforce responsible for, among other things, monitoring the situation and managing the response to the Covid-19 outbreak and identifying gaps for corrective action. The effectiveness of the implementation of the social welfare programmes is therefore questionable when the responsible Ministry is not part of the strategic Taskforce.

Through a press statement issued on 30 March 2020, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development assured the nation that ZWL\$200 million will be availed on a monthly basis to cater for one million vulnerable households per month under the harmonised cash transfer programme. Effectively, this will translate to ZWL\$200 per household.

With ZWL\$200 one household can only buy either of the following products:

- 6 loaves of bread only per month
- 2kg of rice only per month
- 4kgs of sugar only per month
- 1 pocket of potatoes only per month
- 1kg of meat only per month.

The ZWL\$200 million is therefore not enough to sustain vulnerable citizens and the government commitment to safeguarding the lives of the poor and vulnerable remains questionable. Whilst the government is doing whatever it takes to respond to the health emergency by for instance hiring extra staff it is also important to consider people's livelihoods.

## Recommendations

- The role of social welfare in the fight against COVID-19 cannot be overemphasised. The conspicuous absence of the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare in the COVID-19 Inter-Ministerial Taskforce is being treated as an oversight on the part of government. ZIMCODD therefore strongly recommends that the government incorporate this important ministry which will go a long way in identifying the real beneficiaries of the harmonised cash transfer programmes proposed by the government. In addition, resource allocation must be informed by a needs assessment which lies in the mandate of the same Ministry. Needs assessment will inform upward revision of the social protection budget allocation for the poor and marginalised urban households.
- The government should take a holistic approach to the fight against COVID 19 by addressing the varying needs and aspirations of the vulnerable groups including women, informal traders, People with Disabilities (PWDs) and food insecure households.

# Women hard hit by poor public service delivery

by Angellah Mandoreba

With her baby strapped on her back and the other three children hanging around her one Mrs Kapanga from Norton narrated how poor public healthcare and acute shortage of safe and portable water has made life a living hell for her, the case with many women living in urban and peri urban areas.

“All my children have a running stomach, and I cannot go about my normal daily business as I have to attend to them. This is all because we are consuming dirty and contaminated water from boreholes that have been sunk near sewer tanks. I cannot afford commercialised boreholes which have become the only source of clean and portable water in Norton.”

As if the water crisis is not enough, Mrs Kapanga expressed discontent at public health service delivery as she went to the nearby local clinic to get medical attention for her children only to be advised to go and buy expensive medication which she and her unemployed husband cannot afford. Kapanga's story is just one but an example of how the revolutionary ethos have been dumped. History has it that revolutionary leaders who led Zimbabwe into independence repeatedly emphasised that “For the revolution to triumph in its totality, there must be emancipation of women.” How ever, four decades down the line, promises of the ruling party are yet to see the light of the day. The quota system for women representation in Parliament is a piecemeal solution to improve the conditions of women and has not done enough in as far as the needs and aspirations of an ordinary Zimbabwean woman is concerned, neither did it bring women emancipation in general.

Institutionalised corruption, rampant abuse of public funds, high unemployment rate and lack of public accountability among other socioeconomic woes bedevilling Zimbabwe have contributed to the plight of women in the mineral rich the Southern African country reflecting a typical natural resource curse.

The aforementioned socioeconomic crises thrive at the expense of public service delivery and it is women who bear the brunt. The writer almost went in tears as she listened to the heart-breaking stories of different women on the side-lines of Social Accountability Monitoring Training Workshops conducted by the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development in Norton and Chivhu sometime in March.

The discourse around gender mainstreaming in the whole governance chain has proved to be a talk-show that has not yielded tangible results for the benefit of an ordinary woman who is wallowing in poverty and deprivation. Poor public service delivery is really taking a toll on residents. Amai Sarudzai, a widow who survives on running a small market stall also lamented poor waste disposal in their area which is a health ticking time bomb.

“We don't have a proper sewage system in Ward 13 such that we use septic tanks. However, the major challenge is that those tasked with emptying the tanks dispose the waste anywhere even behind our houses and playground for the children. They even wash their drums near our sources of water and this is posing hygienic and health risk for us as residents.”

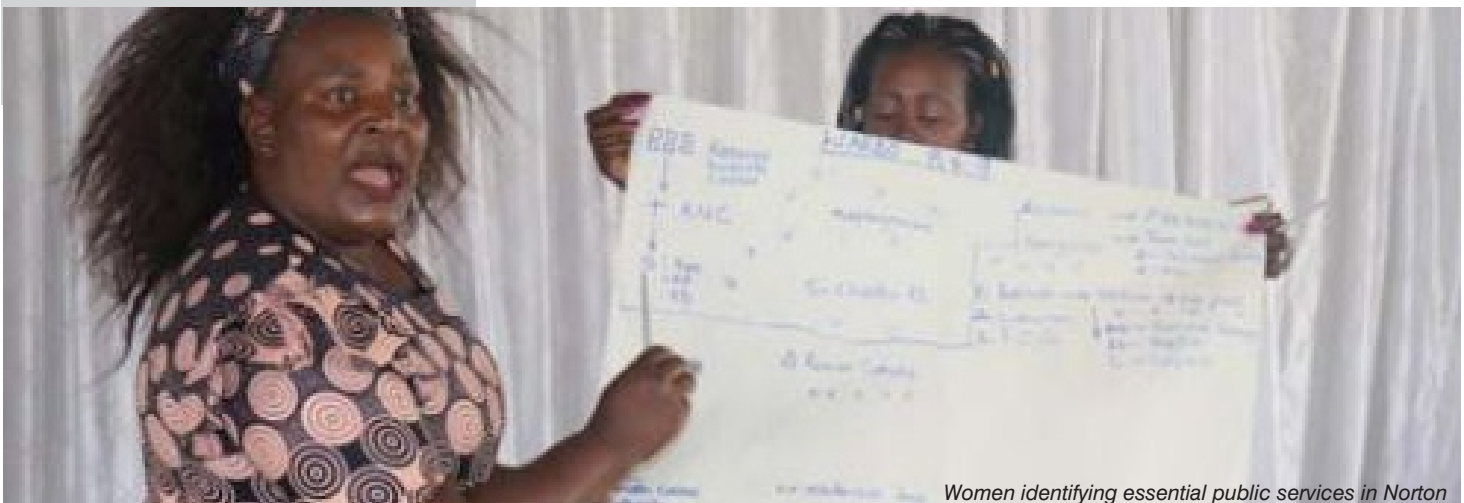
The absence of social safety nets for the elderly has also spelt untold suffering for the country's senior citizens. ZIMCODD interfaced with one of the senior citizens in Norton who narrated her ordeal as she survives on bread crumbs from well-wishers. “All my children died, I have no one to look after me. I depend on well-wishers for food and I have a very small garden in front of my doorstep where I grow crops like pumpkins which I later on sell for my upkeep.” Asked if it is not high time for her to rest, laughingly she said “Zvino ndikazorora ndoita sei, ndorarama nei?” (What will become of me if I rest, for me to live I have to work,” said Gogo Matambo.

All this is happening alongside the existence of a very progressive Constitution which obligates the government to provide decent welfare for the elderly people. Chapter 4, Section 82 (c) provides that people over age of seventy have the right to “receive financial support by way of social security and welfare.” It is regrettable how the country's senior citizens have been turned into “hustlers.”

Given this background, ZIMCODD is engaged in massive Social Accountability Monitoring training for women in social networks. Social accountability is a concept that can be understood as a mechanism that bridges the gap between public service providers (duty bearers) and public service users (citizens) for them to collaborate on identifying challenges and proffering probable solutions to public service delivery related challenges.

Zimbabwe is one of the countries still lacking proactive duty bearers who exercise public accountability, therefore there is need for citizens to take various and constitutional means to demand such. In the trainings, the coalition is helping women with tools they can use to demand public accountability from duty bearers.

It is ZIMCODD's belief that because women are the hardest hit by the current socioeconomic quagmire, women must be at the centre of the economic governance process not as passive recipients of services but as active players in the whole process. That way, women's living conditions can improve.



Women identifying essential public services in Norton



## As healthcare soars, the inequality gap widens

By Charles Kautare

“Pregnant woman dies of negligence at Parirenyatwa.” This was one of the most disturbing headlines carried by The Herald on 5 September 2019 as it was reported that a pregnant woman died together with the child at Parirenyatwa Hospital allegedly due to negligence by medical staff manning the maternity ward. It is frightening that the unfortunate incident happened at one of the biggest public hospitals in Zimbabwe. What then do we make of public health service delivery in a country aiming at becoming an Upper-Middle Income Economy 10 years from now? The story was not only heart-breaking but signaled the extent of inequality in the country’s health sector as no case of any member of the elite cluster was reported to have died at a local hospital due to negligence. The inequalities can be highlighted by the circumstances surrounding the death of the former president, Robert Mugabe who took his last breath in a world-class Gleneagles hospital in Singapore yet the poor die at local “death traps.” Currently, some government officials are criticised for seeking medical attention in foreign lands instead of them resolving the ills associated with the sector at home.

As the 1% of the world population is gathered in Davos for the World Economic Forum, Zimbabweans must reflect on the inequalities in the country’s health sector. The current healthcare delivery system in Zimbabwe leaves a lot to be desired. The Southern African country’s health sector is in limbo, characterised by a shortage of drugs and basic medical necessities like gloves as well as incapacitation of the medical personnel that has witnessed an unresolved impasse between the government

and public hospitals medical doctors. There exists a widening gap between the rich and the poor in terms of access to quality healthcare such that the former, because of their financial and mostly political muscle can access world-class healthcare even for a simple procedure such as a blood pressure check outside the country whilst an ordinary poor citizen is left to die at public hospitals.

It is regrettable how the poor and the marginalised are succumbing to treatable and Stone Age diseases like cholera and typhoid due to the dilapidated state of the public health delivery system. Maladministration coupled with corruption has not spared the sector and this can be exemplified by the recently exposed rot at the country’s drug procurement and supply entity, National Pharmaceutical Company (Natpharm) where for instance drugs meant for public consumption were diverted for private gains at the expense of the poor.

### PPPs not ideal for the health sector

Despite the commonness of Public-Private Partnerships in the health sector across the globe, their effectiveness is yet to be realised in as far as Zimbabwe is concerned. The most worrying issue is that the initiative is perpetuating inequalities in the health sector to the extent that the poor are finding it difficult to access basic essential services that would have been put under private care. A case in point is the privatisation of medical services at Chitungwiza Central Hospital, where almost all the essential services at the hospital were privatised, for instance, mortuary services are now run by Doves, pharmacy and

radiology services are run by Baines Hospital. To what extent does Chitungwiza Hospital remain a public hospital when the critical services are left in the hands of private players to the detriment of the poor who are wallowing in abject poverty and cannot afford these services? The argument that PPPs enrich the capacity, quality and reach of public health services, therefore, remains a fallacy.

The fight against inequality must never be a once-off endeavor but a never-ending process in our lifetime and for generations to come until responsible authorities and everyone else appreciates the fact that equality is a virtue for human existence. A healthy nation is a productive one. It is therefore critical for the Government of Zimbabwe to put in place policies and measures to resuscitate the ailing health sector to ensure that quality healthcare is guaranteed to all and sundry in line with Chapter 4, Section 76 of the Constitution. If the inequalities in the health sector are not addressed at national levels across the globe, Sustainable Development Goal 3 of ensuring healthy lives and promoting wellbeing for all at all ages will remain a pipe dream.



# Polarisation stalling service delivery in Chivhu, a pointer to the national crisis

by Angellah Mandoreba

Four decades after the attainment of independence, Zimbabwe remains a politically fragmented society particularly along the prominent political parties.

The fall of long serving leader Robert Mugabe from power in November 2017 did not bring results in as far as ushering in a new era of a united country is concerned. Ordinary Zimbabweans are bearing the brunt of the obtaining political landscape as they cannot demand accountability from authorities who are "protected" by their political hats.

Public service delivery has thus been sacrificed as authorities either play a political blame game or hide behind their political affiliations to avoid being answerable to the people they serve. This was brought to light by residents in areas where the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) conducted Capacity Building Workshops on social accountability for Residents Associations (RAs) and Social and Economic Justice Ambassadors (SEJAs). In basic terms, social accountability entails citizens, in their different capacities, demanding accountability from public office bearers on the use of public resources.

On Wednesday 29 January 2020, at a capacity building workshop in Chivhu, ZIMCODD came face to face with the discontent residents who accused local authorities of taking political refuge in their political parties at the expense of public service delivery.

*"Despite us as citizens meeting our tax and rate obligations, we don't receive adequate public services. The problem we are facing is that when we lodge our complaints with the town council, we are viewed from political lenses and labelled as enemies of the ruling party, as such most of the people are afraid of questioning poor public service delivery,"* remarked one member of the Chivhu Residents and Ratepayers Association (CHRRRA) who declined to be named.

He further highlighted that they once picketed at the town council in protest over uncollected refuse after which some of the participants were tracked and advised not to engage in such actions again.

Speaking at the same event, CHRRRA Secretary General, David Marufu said the birth of their residents association was met with resistance by the local authorities who labelled them as agents of regime change belonging to opposition political parties. He said CHRRRA was formed upon identification of the gaps in public service delivery fuelled by the abuse of public funds. At one point, the town council failed to account for the monies from corporate social responsibility with citizens failing to demand answers due to fear of victimisation.

Like their counterparts, councillors from the opposition political parties once refused to embrace the residents association suspecting that they are from the state central intelligence.

*"At some point, as CHRRRA, we demanded critical answers from opposition political party councillors and they gave us a cold shoulder as they thought they are immune to public scrutiny. They said that we are from the central intelligence unit and therefore urged their allies to avoid any contacts with us,"* said Marufu.

This, therefore discourages citizens from demanding social accountability which forms a critical component of democratic governance. Social accountability can be done in different ways including but not limited to the use of scorecards, petitions and other constitutional means of demanding answers from duty bearers. Citizens' voices and active participation in both local and national governance processes are a critical ingredient for sustainable development.

Nevertheless, politics has proved to be a major hindrance to the progressive realisation of citizens' social and economic rights and this is mainly due to the heavy politicisation of social accountability initiatives. Most public officials in Zimbabwe and Africa at large do not want to be subjected to public scrutiny. The politicisation of social accountability by the authorities has cultivated a breeding ground for abuse of public

resources and rampant corruption in Zimbabwe. Consequently, the Southern African country's public service delivery is in shambles characterised by incapacitated public health institutions, poor infrastructure, scarcity of portable and safe water among other social woes.

It is against this background that ZIMCODD undertook capacity building for residents associations and SEJAs in Harare, Chivhu, Mutare and Gwanda so that the two groups become vibrant and perform oversight in public finance management at local and national level. With the aim of creating resilient grassroots-based social movements, the workshops equip RAs and SEJAs with social accountability monitoring tools that can be used to demand accountability from solution holders.

If public finance management is to improve in Zimbabwe, it is critical for authorities to depoliticise social accountability and start viewing it as a national developmental tool and not a political one. It is also imperative for citizens to set aside their political differences and join forces in as far as public resources governance is concerned because development knows no political boundaries.



2 Participants at Chivhu Capacity Building Workshop for RAs and SEJAs

## Income inequality - The principal driver of educational disparities in Zimbabwe By Angellah Mandoreba

The deep inequalities that exist between the rich and poor continue to rage across the globe and have become a cause for concern for the majority of citizens. These inequalities in their different forms and manifestations are driven by a myriad of factors depending on the context in which they exist. Key drivers of inequality range from political, social, economic and even environmental whose influence rests upon the country's developmental status and policy processes. This short piece seeks to establish how income inequality promotes educational inequalities in Zimbabwe. Income inequality is one of the critical measures to understand the discrepancies between individuals in a given society but it can be best understood when it is linked to how it promotes other inequalities like those in education. Income inequality refers to the gap between individuals and households in terms of their disposable incomes resulting in income induced social stratification. Educational inequalities can be understood as the disparities in terms of access to quality education and those disparities are fueled by several factors including parents' level of education and their socioeconomic status, gender, race and religion.

Education inequalities in Zimbabwe are not a new phenomenon rather they have roots in the historic racial segregation that dominated the pre-independence era when the education system was designed on racial grounds with the African mind being at the receiving end. Nevertheless, in as far as the post-independence government directed efforts towards an inclusive and equal education system in the country, it's not yet "Uhuru" for the sector. In contemporary Zimbabwe, it's no longer race influencing educational disparities but a number of factors chief among them, family income inequality. The educational inequalities in Zimbabwe are more pronounced now than before in as far as one can recollect.

### Income inequality promotes education inequalities

As an entry point, Zimbabwe is faced with various challenges which are political, social, economic as well as climatic. However, the Southern African country is known for the economic malaise that characterised the past decade to date as citizens continue to hope for the better. The biting cash crunch, high unemployment rate coupled with the historic hyperinflation deteriorated citizens' socioeconomic outlook, putting it bluntly, ordinary citizens are languishing in extreme poverty. It is critical to note that the socioeconomic woes bedeviling the country are man-made as the country has had no taste of good governance for the past decade and this gave birth to an ailing economy without hopes for resuscitation in the near future. Poor governance cultivated an enabling ground for the breeding of

corruption and the cancer has spread in every sector, eating away Zimbabwe's potential to reclaim its "breadbasket" status. Findings in the 2018 Auditor General's Report bears testimony to this.

Due to its destructive nature, poor governance has not spared public service delivery which is in a deplorable state, undermining the dignity of citizens despite the Constitution providing for effective public service delivery. Effective social service delivery is not only important in ensuring that citizens have access to basic social services like education, health, water and sanitation but also helps in bridging the ever-widening inequality gap between the haves and the have nots. This is however not the case with Zimbabwe as the enjoyment of public services by citizens is slowly being turned from a right into a privilege. This is reflected in the way government and other responsible authorities' handle issues of public service delivery. Water is now a precious commodity, public hospitals are now "death traps", infrastructure is dilapidated, talk of the once enviable education system which is now in tatters with only a privileged few capable to access quality education.

Hyperinflation against stagnant salaries has detrimentally eroded people's disposable incomes such that most parents are finding it difficult to make ends meet and afford their children some education. Income inequality in Zimbabwe is promoting inequalities in education at various levels. The parent's level of income determines the quality of school hence the parent's ability to afford children quality education rests upon the availability of financial resources. Thus, family income has become the principal screening factor in the education sector. Opening of the 2020 academic year in Zimbabwe exposed worrying influence that income inequality has on the nature of education a Zimbabwean child can attain.

The privatisation of education in Zimbabwe is now a lucrative business which further separated the rich from the poor. It is regrettable how standards in public education institutions have tremendously gone down and this has seen the financially abled parents resorting to private schools for quality services. What then is in store for the poor. During the week of opening the first academic term in 2020, social media was awash with Riverton Academy (based in Masvingo) cash receipts carrying payments of school fees worth one hundred and six thousand Zimbabwean dollars (ZWS\$106 000). On the contrary, a picture of an adult man who was caught with stolen stationery was circulated on the same platforms. Various sentiments were aired in relation to these posts but very few discussions if any were made in relation to how this was an evidence of the deeply entrenched inequalities in education. Clearly, that was no laughing matter as it showed the extent to which income disparities can affect different children's access to quality education.

Public education schools are characterised by lack of standardized facilities and educational materials and in some cases shortage of teachers resulting in unfavorable teacher to student ratio. This compromises the quality of education offered resulting in parents who

cannot afford private schools being left with no option but to send their children there. This has also been exacerbated by the hikes in school fees with families finding it difficult to afford all the required educational needs. Private schools with better facilities have remained a preserve of the few with a better socioeconomic status. The inequality manifests itself as there is no equal access to quality education between those who attend public schools and those who go to private schools.

The inequality gets more pronounced between an urban and rural child. The majority of families in rural areas have no financial capacity to send children to boarding schools as such in most parts of the country's rural areas. Children in rural areas are subjected to pathetic learning conditions such as students learn from under trees or sub-standard structures and are forced to walk unimaginable distances to and from school. What it means is that these children are not exposed to the same education as their counterparts in urban areas.

This having been noted, the most worrying part is the fact that pupils cannot reach their full potential when denied equal educational opportunities. Education greatly influences one's personal development and the children's eventual position in the socioeconomic ladder. It is therefore critical for the government of Zimbabwe to address these educational inequalities through finding ways of ensuring quality education to all. The International Monetary Fund economists have described income inequalities as the 'defining challenge of our time', thus it is imperative for the government to address the macroeconomic fundamentals to address the income inequalities which promote educational disparities.





## Women in Agriculture and Inequality

by Tinashe Madondo

**W**omen play a critical role in agricultural production especially in the rural economies of developing countries. In the developing world, agriculture accounts for about 63% of the total female employment in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia (Fontana and Paciello, 2000). Rural women contribute largely to the attainment of national food security producing more than half of the food grown worldwide. In Sub-Saharan Africa, this figure is higher with women contributing 60% to 80% of the labour in food production both for household consumption and for sale (Kabeer, 1994). They multi task to sustain their livelihoods, working on the farms and engaging in off-farm activities, as well as continuing their critical role in terms of reproduction.

Nevertheless, instead of getting full recognition, rural women are often viewed as playing a “helping hand” role rather than as a “farmer” or “employee” in their own right. An example of such is illustrated by Article 139 of the Labour Code of Guatemala (2011), which describes women as “helpers” of the male agricultural workers, rather than as a worker entitled to receive their own income which significantly impacts upon the ability of these women to feed themselves and their families.

Women employ different strategies to compensate for the loss of labour through the migration of their husbands and young men to towns and cities in search of employment. As such, they may organize labour exchanges with other women, work longer hours, and hire additional labour. Such strategies adopted by these women help them cope with agricultural production which is the main source of nutrition. The surplus is usually sold to cater for medical bills, provision of education and purchase of farm implements.





## How then does inequality manifest?

Inequality manifests when the man controls the property and money realised from the sale of surplus produce despite him having little contribution to the produce. This is mainly due to the cultural norms and values of societies which place men and women at different power levels. In patriarchal societies, women lack independent rights to land as land rights are only accorded to men, either sons or husbands. In some African countries, women are rarely allocated land in their own right, particularly in patrilineal areas, where land is allocated to men as the heads of households. Women in matrilineal societies on the other hand are allocated land in their own right, but the land is still commonly controlled by their husbands or male clan heads (Food Agriculture Organisation - FAO, 2009). Men are the ones who have full ownership of property and any valuable goods in the household belong to the head of the household. In the event of death of the household head, land or property rights are not inherited by the surviving spouse but a son who automatically assumes the role of head of household. The rules of access and inheritance tend to perpetuate inequality as they generally tend to favour men over women and women with children over those without (Mutangadura 2004).

In addition to limited access to land, women face challenges of access to inputs and credit facilities (capital/money). Collateral security which includes land or production equipment, seems to be one of the major factors constraining women's access to agricultural inputs. According to (FAO, 2005), women's higher illiteracy rates, lack of information about available credit programmes, lack of land titles to be offered as collateral, more limited access to formal employment, and exclusion from credit cooperatives also contribute as stumbling blocks for women's access to credit facilities. The inequalities are also notable in the Land Reform Programme where the allocation of A1 farms was done through the issuance of user permits by the District Administrator upon recommendations from the village head or local councillor who were mainly biased towards men's land rights over those of women, (Manjengwa and Mazhawidza). Thus, in the A1 model, women only obtained rights to use the land but were not given permits because the system favored men. Under the A2 model, a cocktail of conditions perpetuated inequality as one had to demonstrate ability to fund own operations on the farm, provide proof of capacity to utilize land and hire a farm manager and be a holder of a 99-year lease (Rukini, 1992). Such a model discriminated women as only 13-22% of women benefited countrywide.

The effect of gender inequality on agricultural growth and development cannot be over emphasized, hence, the need to set up sustainable and inclusive mechanisms that empower and raise awareness amongst women. Against this backdrop, it is therefore prudent for society and institutions to embrace equality and equity tendencies for agricultural output and economic growth.

## The impact of sovereign debt on citizens' social and economic rights

INTRODUCTION

By Lynnete Hlatywayo

Subject to favorable financing conditions and prudent use of monetary resources borrowed, it is true that debt can foster and advance human development and contribute meaningfully to the development of any country. Sadly, this has not been the case with most of African countries as debt has neither been accrued nor serviced with human rights in mind. Most African countries especially in Southern Africa are increasingly falling into debt trap and this has taken away citizens' human rights. In more concrete terms, loan contraction and debt repayment processes have been done at the expense of the social and economic rights of citizens. That is through the diversion of resources meant for basic social services towards debt repayment. In the case of Zimbabwe, the country's external debt stands at USD8 billion as at 30 September 2019 as presented in the 2020 National Budget. The debt has weighed down the realization of citizens' social and economic rights as the government fails to provide basic social services such as healthcare, education, water and sanitation. This short piece seeks to establish the extent to which sovereign debt hinders the fulfillment of citizens' social and economic rights as enshrined in the National Constitution of Zimbabwe.

## The Bill of Rights

Chapter 4 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe provides for the progressive realization of citizens' social and economic rights. These rights include the right to healthcare, education, safe and portable water and sanitation, the right to food. These rights are therefore constitutional rights and not a privilege. The right to life is interrelated to the right to food, water and health, therefore denying these to citizens means denying them a right to life. Thus, the state must not only respect human rights, but also guarantee these rights. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights also mandates the government to mobilize maximum resources available to implement public policies for the progressive realization of human rights. The Constitution of Zimbabwe also mandates the government to take every practical measure with resources available to it to achieve the progressive realization of human rights. However, the ability of the state to meet these obligations largely rests on two things that is the availability of resources as well as allocation of sufficient financial investment in critical sectors for the realization of these rights. This poses an obligation on the state to secure sufficient funds through domestic resource mobilization and in some instances, secure international assistance.

## Deliberate cut in social spending as government commits to debt repayment

The deliberate cut and diversion of funds meant for public investment threatens the realization of citizens' socio-economic rights. Juxtaposing the funds channeled towards debt servicing with government expenditure on social service delivery gives one a vivid picture of how debt is a human rights concern. In most cases, unsustainable levels of sovereign debt have burdened most countries and the ensuing cost of servicing or repaying the debt is often high such that it has become a significant part of the national budgets, thus it has reduced the amount of resources available to governments for the progressive realization of socio economic rights. As a result of the debt burden, African countries particularly Zimbabwe, are increasingly failing to make strides and guarantee the rights of citizens. In the case of Zimbabwe, the 2017 National Budget debt servicing for instance reached an amount of USD\$766 704 761 against USD\$385 708 443 which was channeled towards the health sector.

Due to the failure of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in the 1990s, Zimbabwe continued to borrow new loans from financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (W.B) as well as the Africa Development Bank (ADB). The new loans, an estimate of US\$750 million, were accrued not to invest in social services sector instead there were accrued for the repayment of old debts.

Moreover, the austerity measures launched under the Transitional Stabilization Programme (TSP) in 2018 by the Minister for Finance and Economic Development with a deliberate cut in social spending in the wake of increase in taxes for example the infamous 2% tax and privatization of public services further aggravated the situation. According to a 2019 research on the Impact of Indebtedness on Human Rights in Zimbabwe carried out by the African Forum and Network on Debt and Development (AFRODAD) and the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD), the austerity programme implemented by the government of Zimbabwe bears resemblance to international financial institutions (IFIs) inspired reforms aimed at cutting expenditure has deepened poverty and inequality undermining human rights. All these are efforts by the government to bring about fiscal balance and raise funds for the repayment of debt the country owes to IFIs. The impact of this has manifested through poor social service delivery that has hit almost every sector. The most cause for concern is the situation in the public health sector where public hospitals have now become "death traps" characterised by shortage of essential health drugs and medical supplies as well as poor maintenance of medical equipment. The longstanding impasse between public hospitals doctors and the government bears testimony to this. The dire situation has detrimental effects on ordinary citizens who cannot afford private healthcare and it means that their right to basic healthcare is violated.

Conditions that come along loan contraction from IFIs often limit investment in public services and undermine the provision of accessible public services by citizens. These conditions undermine the ability of governments to promulgate development policies which allows the progressive realisation of citizens' social and economic rights. Bankekas and Lumina argue that the imposition of structural adjustment programs on debtor states is far from solving the complex problem of sovereign debt, in fact it exacerbates the debt, damages the state's economic sovereignty, injures the entrenched rights of peoples and worsens the borrower's economic situation. This can be exemplified by the fact that IMF once disbursed a US\$300 million loan to Zimbabwe between 1981 and 1983. Some of the conditions included devaluation, restrictions on government spending as well as a freeze in wages. In Tanzania, debt relief also came with unfavorable conditions resulting in the privatisation of water mainly in Dar Es Salaam at the detriment of poor citizens.

Although the objective of the conditionalities will be to restore the country's ability to repay the debt, studies have shown that they have an impact on the progressive realization of citizens' socio-economic rights. Abrogation of citizens' rights contribute to increasing poverty, marginalization and inequality. It is worrying to note that the disproportionate impact of debt servicing and conditionalities is largely felt by citizens, when in the actual sense the funds borrowed would have been rarely spent in ways that upholds human development and human rights.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it is evident from the above that debt distress remains at the core of the significant threats impacting the realization and enjoyment of socio-economic rights by citizens in Zimbabwe. The incapacity of the state to fulfill citizens' rights can be well attributed to the debt crisis in the country. The state must adopt a rights-based approach when it comes to debt management. Without a sustainable debt management framework as proposed by ZIMCODD, the huge debt burden will continue to negatively impact on the realization of citizens' social and economic rights.



## Tax and Gender Inequality

By Tinashe Madondo

Taxation is the most sustainable and predictable source of domestic resource mobilization for the provision of public goods and services, as well as a key tool for addressing socio-economic inequality, including gender inequality. A study by ZIMCODD on Zimbabwe's taxation systems in 2018 titled Tax evasion: A gender and socioeconomic sabotage highlighted that women and men experience the impacts of tax policies differently, because of their diverse and unequal positions in the workforce, as consumers, producers, asset owners, and as those responsible for the activities of the "care economy" in households and outside. Moreover, gender inequality intersects with other inequalities resulting from socio-economic status, race, age, location, class and other social markers. Notably, Zimbabwe's current tax regime perpetuates gender inequality.

Globally, taxes have become a common source of governments revenues. Despite its commonness, a study by Grown and Valodia (2018) brings to light how a particular taxation system can perpetuate gender inequality and exploitation of women in the informal sector. The duo note that informal taxes affect women more than men. In some sad instances, women are subject to "sexual tax" by the tax officials and police in return for having taxes and fees waived.

Regressive tax systems affect women more than their male counterparts as most women engage in unpaid care work. In Zimbabwe, for instance, the Value Added Tax (VAT) pegged at 14,5% in the 2020 National Budget adversely affects women more than men as it applies equally to everyone regardless of one's level of income. Research across different countries have demonstrated that women tend to spend more than men on necessities such as food, clothes, school items and medicines that benefit the whole household rather than individuals. Therefore, VAT on most consumable items affects low income earners who are mostly women. The 2% Intermediated Money Transfer Tax is also retrogressive. The majority of women engage in low paying casual and informal work as the labour market is largely male dominated. As a result of the cash shortages, electronic and mobile platforms have taken over as the leading platforms for payment of salaries and allowances of which women get very minimum rewards for their work.

In 2017, the International Labour Organization estimated that 67% of informal traders in Zimbabwe were women. Similarly, Mupambireyi (2014) notes that in the flea market trade alone, women constituted between 60% and 70% in Zimbabwe. The high numbers of women in informal trading therefore requires special attention in relation to taxation considering the multiple taxes required at different points of trade. Apart from the presumptive tax, informal traders particularly flea market traders often pay market fees, toilet fees and storage fees. Resultantly, informal traders pay multiple and regressive taxes which are disproportionate to their low incomes compared to formal traders with higher incomes and fixed taxes.

The proportion of economic activities categorised as informal or small-scale is usually high in Zimbabwe. Given the depressed state of the economy over an extended period, the government has resorted to widen its tax net to rope in small-scale business activities for instance in 2005, the government introduced presumptive tax (a tax on gross income) paid by small-scale traders in some businesses. Little is however known on the impact of presumptive tax on traders particularly women who make up the majority of small-scale traders in Zimbabwe.

There is no positive correlation between the taxing of men and women considering women engage more hours in unpaid work that benefits the whole family, community and nation but are expected to pay equally the same taxes as men who spend more time engaging in personal paid work earning more money than women. The government of Zimbabwe should take strides in promulgating progressive taxation policies.

## Testimonials on inequality from Lukosi, Hwange, Zimbabwe

### RICH BUT INFESTED BY INEQUALITY

Lukosi is an area located in Ward 20, eastern side of Hwange town. Despite the fact that Lukosi is rich in natural resources and fertile soils that favour horticulture, villagers are wallowing in poverty on daily basis and this is fueled by the fact that their livelihoods are being destroyed by mining activities in the area, water pollution and reduction in livestock grazing area. Lack of development in this area has led to prostitution and increase in diseases. Poverty has seen villagers engaging in criminal activities like poaching for survival. Communities are bystanders as foreigners come and loot their resources yet they work in menial conditions earning peanut salaries. Furthermore, mining activities in the area destroyed roads, caused land degradation, affected farming, caused river siltation and noise pollution. Efforts to engage these investors are fruitless as they are met with resistance and threats.

## Inequality resulted in my generational poverty

**M**y name is Joshua and I was born from a poor family in the rural Lukosi. On the same day I was born, James was born from a rich family in an affluent suburb of Mpumalanga in Hwange town. My parents did not go to school and yet James's parents went to school and were lucky to be gainfully employed as artisans at the Hwange Colliery Company. Due to their status, they could afford to have a better life which included in-house flushing toilets and piped water systems. Unfortunately, as for me, due to our economic situation we used Blair toilets, fetched water from the river. James managed to further his education and became a gainfully employed child just like his parents. Unfortunately, I failed to further my studies and I am now a herd boy in Lukosi and my children are not going to school either because I cannot afford to pay the fees required.

## I could be having a good life but inequality put a stop to it

**M**y name is Susan Chikuba. I was born in 1952 in Chilanga Village. I was one of the 2 children born of my mother but the other one passed on due to poor health services in the area. I managed to finish my primary education and was lucky to get a place to study at Lukosi Secondary School. However, due to long distance to and from school as well as heavy presence of straying wild animals I could no longer continue with my education. This affected my life as well as the future of my children as I could not afford to send them to school. Now I'm faced with a home full of uneducated children and grandchildren. They are now involved in all sorts of criminal activities for survival and this was all caused by the following inequalities, lack of proper health facilities, education facilities, employment opportunities, poverty, poor road network and marginalisation.

## Selective application of law, a major driver of inequality

**N**orman lives in a homestead near Lukosi river. He once owned a small garden where he carried out farming activities to sustain his family. One day, members of the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) invaded his area and ordered him to destroy his garden situated at the river bank as this will cause land degradation. Meanwhile, the Chinese contractors were at the same river harvesting sand and causing a lot of damage with their heavy trucks and equipment. The same company is also causing water and air pollution. When he asked EMA staff to give same orders to Chinese Company, they ignored. Norman did not give up; he took up his complaint to

Lukosi District Council but he was told that the Chinese pay a lot of taxes hence they can do whatever they want. The open pits left by the mining company have claimed lives especially children in the community. Due to dust and lack of health assistance, people are suffering from pneumoconiosis. When communities staged a peaceful protest against this injustice, they were brutalised by the riot police.

## Inequality destroyed our future

**M**y name is Consequence Muleya and I was born in ward 20 in Lukosi from an under privileged family of seven. Since I was born, I have never gone to school. My family had a small plot which could only produce food for family consumption and nothing extra to sell for income. At the age of ten, I lost all my parents and life became more difficult for me and my siblings. To make matters worse, there were no government subsidies to support us so we had to start looking for jobs so that we fend for ourselves. We worked at the irrigation and continued to farm at our plot till the age when I managed to get a job at a Chinese Mining Company. Unfortunately, I was injured at work and lost my job. No compensation was given to me after the injury. Furthermore, due to dust from the mining activities, our agriculture yield has gone down. This further plunged my family into extreme poverty. Some of my siblings have unfortunately resorted to prostitution, begging in shops and sometimes criminal activities for survival.



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