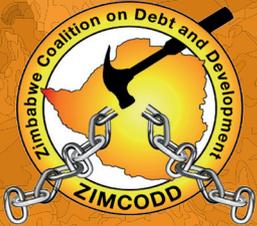


BREAKFREE!



Newsletter Issue 3 | Third Quarter 2020



What sort of country and society do we want to be after the Covid-19 pandemic?"

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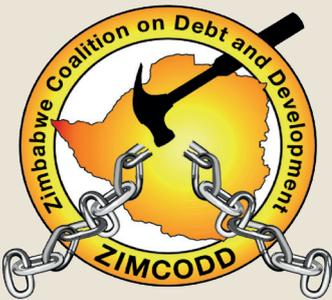
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Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development

Investing in people for social and economic justice



Who We Are



The Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) is a socio – economic justice coalition established in February 2000. Its mandate has been to facilitate citizens` involvement in making pro-people public policy. ZIMCODD views indebtedness, the unfair global trade regime and lack of democratic people-centred economic governance as root causes of the social and economic crises in Zimbabwe and the world at large. Drawing from community-based livelihood experiences of its membership, ZIMCODD implements programmes aimed at delivering the following objectives;

- To raise the level of economic literacy among ZIMCODD members to include views and participation of grassroots and marginalised communities;
- To facilitate research, lobbying and advocacy in order to influence and promote policy change;
- To formulate credible and sustainable economic and social policy alternatives; and
- To develop a national coalition and facilitate the building of a vibrant movement for social and economic justice.

Where We Work

ZIMCODD`s headquarters are in Harare, with regional offices in Bulawayo. There are committees and livelihoods assemblies in Mutare, Chipinge South (Checheche), Goromonzi, Binga, Gokwe, Gwanda and Matobo.

ZIMCODD is a member of regional and international networks working on Social and Economic Justice. In the SADC region, it is the Host of the Permanent Secretariat of the of the Southern African People`s Solidarity Network (SAPSN) from January 2019, whose focus is to support the development of alternatives to neoliberal corporate led globalization, with a negative impact on national and regional policies. ZIMCODD had once hosted this vibrant regional network from 2003 – 2011 before handing it over to Malawi on the rotational secretariat basis. Currently it is host to the Zimbabwe Social Forum (ZSF) and through this platform, ZIMCODD aims to develop a vibrant space for reflective thinking, democratic debate, formulation and exchange of alternative ideas to the neoliberal agenda in Zimbabwe and beyond.

Our Goal



The goal of the ZIMCODD 2020-2023 Strategic period is
“To contribute towards sustainable social and economic justice in Zimbabwe”

Our Vision



Socio-economic justice in Zimbabwe anchored on a vibrant people-based movement

Why We Exist

To take action against the debt burden and socioeconomic injustices through movement building and alternative policy formulation.



Thematic Focus Areas

The thrust of ZIMCODD’s work is to address social inequality and ensure shared economic prosperity for every Zimbabwean. It does so through the following thematic areas:

- i. Domestic Resource Mobilisation (DRM)- This thematic area emerges from a realisation of the importance of domestic resources for driving sustainable development.
- ii. Public Resource Management (PRM)- There is a growing realisation of the need to promote prudent stewardship of public resources as an enabler of social and economic justice.
- iii. Trade Justice and Livelihoods (TJL)- This thematic area ensures that ZIMCODD remains rooted in the issues and struggles of the grassroots.
- iv. Organisational Development (OD)- This thematic area acknowledges that Successful delivery of objectives outlined in the strategic plan (2020-2023) will depend on the strength and suitability of the organisational structure.

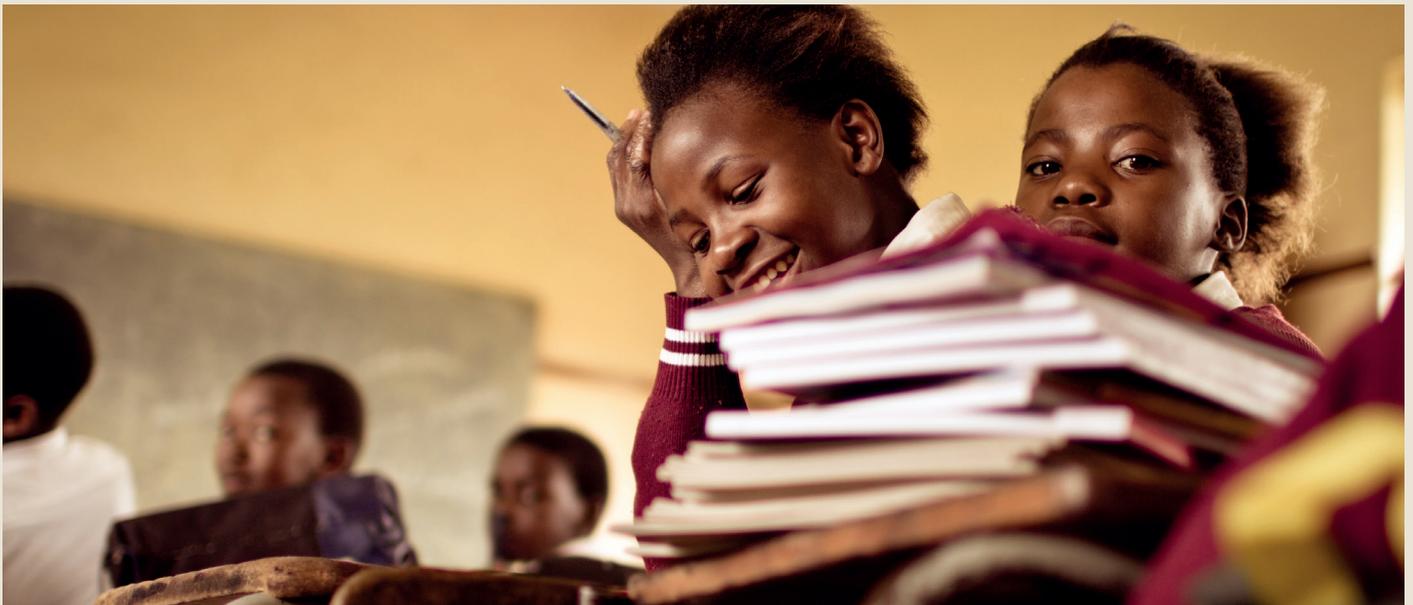
Core Implementation Approaches

The ZIMCODD thematic areas outlined above are linked and contribute towards social and economic justice.

To fulfil the work under the thematic areas, ZIMCODD employs a core set of implementation approaches namely:

- Civic Participation in Economic Development (CPED) to build on and consolidate the mobilisation of people of Zimbabwe to champion socio-economic justice and development.
- Policy Research and Advocacy (PRA) anchored on evidence-based lobbying and advocacy informed by research.
- Movement Building as a key pillar in the fight for social and economic justice focusing on harnessing public voices and collective efforts at local, regional and international level to build a broad based vibrant social movement.
- Information Dissemination strategies that seek to utilise the wealth of information across the three thematic areas.

THE ZIMBABWE COALITION ON DEBT AND DEVELOPMENT (ZIMCODD)



Theory Of Change

Our theory of change is that



If ZIMCODD strengthens citizens' agency; use evidence to advocate and lobby for prudent public resources management, domestic resource mobilisation and trade justice then it will be able to influence development and implementation of pro-poor policies that leads to attainment of socio-economic justice in Zimbabwe".



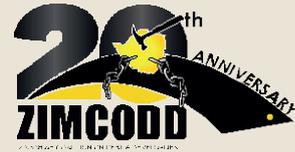
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Comments and Feedback

The Editor, Breakfree Newsletter

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Tirivangani Mutazu

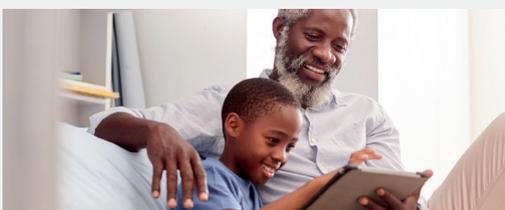
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Editorial

The Covid 19 pandemic has exposed the nation's levels of unpreparedness and under-resourcing to respond to major crises. This is a direct result of the systemic weakening of the State's public service response capabilities, the watering down of democratic oversight and accountability mechanisms and the disregard of constitutional mandates with impunity.

We need a distinctive new approach to social and economic justice. One that seeks a common national vision and the renewal of the tattered social contract between the rulers and the ruled, and between the haves and the have nots. An approach that addresses growing inequality, through the equitable sharing of power, resources and opportunities. This, bearing in mind the fact that the more pronounced inequality becomes the less cohesive we become as a nation and the less capable we become of treating everyone equally regardless of class. To secure the future, we need an approach to social and economic justice that prioritises the youth through youth led and youth focused redistributive policies, job creating economic growth, robust public sector investment and sustainable wealth transfers. One that addresses the oppressive reality of gender injustice by reducing the care burden imposed upon women and young girls through better social service delivery whilst at the same time improving protections against gender-based violence. One that secures national domestic resource mobilisation capacities through democratic oversight and accountability, fair taxation, comprehensive anti-corruption measures and the democratic involvement of the diaspora in decision making.

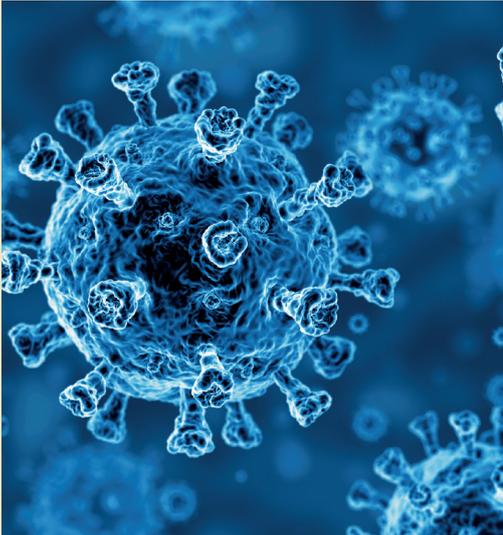
“Too many Zimbabweans are in pain, lacking care, estranged from the enjoyment of fundamental rights...”



In addition to a commitment to enhancing domestic resource mobilisation we need an approach that incentivises domestic productivity particularly by de-criminalising the informal sector and facilitating financial and technology transfers to give smallholder and informal producers a competitive edge as part of broader efforts towards even growth. We need an approach to social and economic justice that embraces the urgency of climate change and gives priority to strengthening our collective resilience to climatic shocks whilst gradually moving away from carbon intensive production system. This will entail giving smallholder farmers, artisanal miners, fishing communities and others in resource rich areas democratic control over the extractive activities in and around their communities. Above all we need an approach to economic justice that subordinates our economic choices and priorities to the broader goal of achieving shared prosperity justice and equality

Too many Zimbabweans are in pain, lacking care, estranged from the enjoyment of fundamental rights and without the means to influence decisions that impact day to day living.

It is early October 2020 as lockdown restrictions pave way to a gradual return to 'normal.' This debased sense of normal in which children return to schools where there are no teachers, entire communities spend weeks without water and nurses and doctors have long abandoned their stations in protest over poor working conditions is what social and economic injustice looks like. Women are hardest hit. The self-evident injustice of a system that is built around the assumption that poor women will always be there to take care of the hungry, sick and disabled on behalf of society consigns society's largest population section to lifetimes of poverty, indignity and violence. So too do the neoliberal - 'leave it to capitalism' and trickle-down policy assumptions informing the middle-income ambitions of current policy trajectories. These policy assumptions specialising in taking away from the poor and benefitting the rich have enlarged the gaps between the rich and the poor, as well as between the rulers and the ruled making Zimbabwe a polarised nation ill at ease with itself and unable to respond to growing crisis.



It is certainly too early to fully grasp the long-term, impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic. Just as it is too early to fully understand the multi-generational impacts of the exhausting range of past disruptive events from the quotidian effects of colonial oppression, to the unquantifiable harms of Gukurahundi violence, to major economic shocks like the structural adjustment programme of the 1990s, to Operations like Murambatsvina, to freak weather events like Cyclone Idai. This rollcall of major calamities is also a reminder that our collective wellbeing and shared prosperity depend much on the overall health of our public services.

Two broad themes emerge to illustrate the need for a broad-based social and economic justice agenda. The first one is that the economy is not working for the benefit of the majority of Zimbabweans – we urgently need to re-imagine the vision, structure and shared benefit of our economy. The second one is that the government is ill prepared to respond to crises – thus we need a renewed economic vision for Zimbabwe, centred on the principles of social and economic justice also known as Gutsaruzhinji. This idea of Gutsaruzhini envisages a fairer more equal society in which the social contract holding the country together enjoins the state to facilitate the just and equitable distribution of the nation's resources for the benefit of the many not just the few.

The structure of our economy is a barrier to the realisation of Gutsaruzhinji. Firstly, the concentration of economic power and opportunities in the hands of a narrow military bureaucratic political elite in a context with a diverse and young population limits the country's potential to fully tap into the economic potential of a vast segment of the country's population. Secondly the enclaved nature of the economy which privileges the urban over the rural, and the formal economy at the expense of the informal promotes unequal growth and perpetuates structural inequality. This enclave nature also steers resources away from labour intensive sectors like smallholder agriculture and the informal sector towards capital intensive sectors with limited labour absorption capacity. Thirdly the historical patterns of economic growth and resource distribution which replicate patriarchal and neo-colonial extractive prerogatives at the expense of locally driven sustainable alternatives lock many sectors and communities into exploitive economic systems detrimental to their long-term prospects and sovereignty. We need to transform our economy away from its roots in the violent, racist, sexist and colonial exploitation of our people and resources towards justice and equality.

Many Zimbabweans want an economy capable of addressing mass unemployment, increasing societal resilience in the face of perpetual crises and democratising economic power to allow young people and historically marginalised groups to access economic opportunities. These aspirations though commonly held are frequently drowned out in the partisan top down system

of democratic decision making. Many voices are not being heard or if they are being heard then their messages are not being prioritised. Entrenched partisanship fuelled by unresolved electoral tensions often reduce policy making to the imposition of partisan objectives and settling of political scores. Its violent nature further excludes many well-meaning and patriotic Zimbabweans from seeking public office. More especially, the failure to devolve power and authority as provided for in the Constitution amidst the concentration of power in the hands of a few creates an unsurmountable gap between those who experience problems and those with the means and responsibility to facilitate resolution. Creating a conducive environment for constructive and nation building dialogue therefore remains a critical first step towards making social and economic justice are reality.

Welcome to Social and Economic Justice Agenda – ZIMCODD's nation building quarterly compilation of independent analysis and perspective on critical issues from a social and economic justice perspective. In this issue is a range of articles reflecting on social and economic justice in this time of Covid-19. These reflections from a diverse cross section of writers and practitioners broadly illuminate the need and possibility for progressive groups to confront the structural, ideological, policy and other barriers to the achievement of social and economic justice in our lifetime.



Towards a people centered National Budget

Janet Zhou,



THE ZIMBABWE COALITION ON DEBT AND DEVELOPMENT (ZIMCODD)

The COVID-19 pandemic has had devastating effects on all economies of the world with Zimbabwe being no exception. Apart from COVID-19, Zimbabwe is grappling with climatic-induced drought, macro-economic shocks and the effects of Cyclone Idai. All sectors of the economy have been affected by the COVID - 19 pandemic, especially the informal sector, agriculture, transport, manufacturing, tourism and mining. About 7.7 million (approximately half of the population) need food assistance, and at least 1.7 million require additional social protection (IMF, September 2020). The advent of COVID-19 has sharpened inequalities, worsened poverty and plunged the country into staggering debt.

Zimbabwe's poor and vulnerable populations, particularly, women and youth are struggling to cope. Overwhelmed public health systems and weak social protection mechanisms have culminated in the shifting of public responsibilities to already overstretched families and communities.

Yet we know and understand that the failure of Zimbabwe to respond to major crises is a result of deliberate policy and political choices. Overtaxing burdened and marginalised groups, prolonged austerity measures, mismanagement of public resources, lack of transparency and accountability in the extractives sector, illicit financial flows, lack of fiscal discipline and unsustainable debt have exacerbated the economic quagmire the country finds itself in. High maternal mortality rates, lack of access to water, housing, energy and other basic amenities for the majority of Zimbabwe's population is a wake-up call for Zimbabwe to change course towards justice and equality.

It is time that Zimbabwe responds to all these crises with a People Centred budget that increases developmental outcomes for the poorest and most vulnerable in society. It is time that Zimbabwe makes deliberate efforts to effectively promote participatory budgeting that puts citizens in charge of how the government spends their resources. The United Nations considers participatory budgeting as democratic "best practice".

It is time that the government takes into account key propositions from the grassroots for consideration in the 2021 budget formulation process and makes the necessary policy changes to facilitate a people's budget. Cosmetic consultations will result in the same elitist process that advances the interests of a few to the detriment of the masses.

A people centred budget will;

- Restore fairness to the tax code, strengthen social protection measures, and ensure long-term fiscal sustainability.
- Promote resuscitation of industry and commerce, economic recovery and growth and creation of employment.
- Facilitate economic opportunity for all segments of the population by promoting affordable education and health care whilst increasing disposable incomes of low wage earners.
- Increase tax progressivity and adequacy by implementing higher marginal tax rates for high income earners and corporates, eliminating inefficient corporate tax loopholes, removing unjustifiable tax incentives to large conglomerates and reducing the tax burden on marginalised groups like women, the youth and people living with disabilities.
- Foster Effective debt management – The Mid-Term Policy Review Statement highlighted that Zimbabwe had no budget deficit in the first half of 2020 yet poverty has increased exponentially. The People's Budget would promote fiscal responsibility and reach a sustainable public-debt trajectory by raising revenue through Domestic Resource Mobilisation (DRM) progressively.

The expiry of the Transitional Stabilisation Plan with its "Austerity for Prosperity" measures is a welcome development. The new Five Year National Development Strategy needs to reinforce disaster preparedness and emergency response mechanisms that facilitate government capacity to respond to crisis effectively and timeously.

There is need for an inclusive development trajectory for Zimbabwe which has faced decades of isolation, debt and economic malaise. Three key imperatives come to mind as Zimbabwe considers how public expenditure can be mobilised to restore the country's fortunes in the post-covid era. **These include efforts to:**

- Combat resource leakages resulting from corruption, illicit financial flows and diversion of public resources through robust oversight, transparency and accountability
- Provide comprehensive social protection mechanisms to cushion vulnerable groups with special attention on women, youth, children, people with disabilities and the elderly
- Decriminalise and facilitate the inclusion of working Zimbabweans subsisting in the informal economy through income substitution, procurement quotas for public goods and services as well as smart investments in inclusive financing and upskilling.

We can work together to change the narrative and discourse on Zimbabwe's story. A budget which is all encompassing in rhetoric and implementation can result in the realisation of a more just and equitable society capable of providing the economic resources for all Zimbabweans to live in dignity.

Janet Zhou is the Executive Director of the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development.



The Impacts of Privatisation of Public Services Provision in Zimbabwe in the COVID-19 era

Adrian Chikowore,

African countries, including Zimbabwe are confronted with a human crisis of immeasurable proportions. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a health emergency, leading to a multi-layered economic and financial crisis, rooted in patterns of financialization and globalization that have over-time worsened structural inequalities within and amongst states. The privatisation of public services provision which is the transfer of once government obligations to private actors has been on a rising trend in Zimbabwe. Its origins can be traced back to the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) era of the early 1990s when the neoliberal policy approach of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund was and still is influencing the direction of national development policies, frameworks and projects. These institutions continue to influence reforms focussed on market-based approaches in the country and the implications are varying though dire to the livelihoods of the ordinary Zimbabwean, worse still, given the ravaging impacts on the COVID-19 pandemic

Privatisation of Social Services Pre-COVID-19 and the Crisis Period



Before the dawn of COVID-19, the government of Zimbabwe through the Transitional Stabilisation Program (TSP) was rolling out public sector reform which entailed partially privatising state own enterprises, some of which are directly linked to the provision of social services and these are within the education, health, labour and national productivity sectors. Some of the entities that were earmarked or still earmarked for full or partial privatisation include Zimbabwe Electricity Development Transmission Company, Industrial Development Corporation of Zimbabwe and the Infrastructure Development Bank of Zimbabwe. Whilst these institutions may be commercial entities included under the TSP, Section 13 of the country's constitution and legislation including the ZIDA Act have tenets for private sector activity across sectors and this has been a challenge in the social sectors as the profit motive of business in the provision of services such as education, health, water and sanitation has been making inroads albeit the widely documented negative implications of privatisation and public private partnerships. These implications include disenfranchisement from access to public services resultant from high user fees, financial and material underfunding for public institutions, deprofessionalisation of human resources in public

social services i.e. teachers, health workers and the erosion of confidence in public institutions.

Additional concerns with private sector activity in social services emanate from the regulatory aspect of things were government has limited capacity to enforce regulation of private sector activities leading to the abuse of loopholes and weaknesses in social services systems in the country. COVID-19 has ravaged the country's socio-economic and political status quo.

The pandemic has exposed the depth of the inequalities within and amongst communities in the country and the consequences of decades of austerity policies and de-regulation, undermining public systems and progress towards universal social protection. Given



“COVID-19 has ravaged the country’s socio-economic and political status quo.”

the country’s health as well as its economic system were in dire state before COVID-19, the crisis has put the country in peculiar situation as health-care workers are concerned about their risk, many have been infected, and there were unclear pathways for how to manage those who had been infected. In addition, the availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) has been and still is insufficient in public institutions whilst the same cannot be said about private facilities where both adequate human and material resources are available for treatment but at a cost beyond the reach of many. Schools have been closed though an exception was made for examination classes.

Business activity and livelihoods were affected broadly given that the country has a highly informalized economy, unemployment has been high and COVID-19 led to increased lay-offs across various sectors including transport, tourism and the small manufacturing enclave. This had an intrinsic impact on household food security in an already drought ridden

country where profiteering by private producers and retailers made food, especially grain, unaffordable for many who had to look upon the government’s elusive food handouts and COVID-recovery protection schemes. Given that in Zimbabwe, over 31% of the population are classified as multidimensionally poor with evidence showing that access to public services is worsened when the economy is on its knees and public services such as education and health are privatised, COVID-19 exposed the negative implications on lower enrollment to education via online classes and utilisation of private reproductive health services by mainly women who cannot afford them. Resultantly, some women were forced to give birth without professional medical assistance, increasing the risks of maternal and child mortality. Moreover, to sustain a living, some out of school and work youth regress to harmful and irresponsible activities such as crime and prostitution. This interplay of developmental issues does not only present a dilemma of opportunity costs, but grave human rights, gender and sustainable development concerns faced during this COVID era.

Conclusion and Way Forward

The Zimbabwean state has an obligation to provide social services to its citizens amidst or without a crisis and these obligations and rights to the people cannot be retracted. They are part of the socio-economic rights enshrined in international human rights instruments and frameworks that include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) which SADC countries subscribe to as part of the Bill of Rights, the African Charter on the Right and Welfare of the Child, were particular mentions

in Article 11 and Article 17 note that every child has a right to education. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) goals number 1 dedicated to addressing poverty, 2 eradicating hunger, 3 provision of universal good health and well-being and SDG 4 on quality education entail the need for inclusive and equitable opportunities and services provision. Irrespective of these instruments, privatisation continues to soar and concerns regarding accessibility, affordability and quality of services

across sectors have become topical as all draw down to the financial position of the consumers hence widening the social stratification gap of the citizens as those who can afford obtain quality services within the COVID-19 crisis.



THE ZIMBABWE COALITION ON DEBT AND DEVELOPMENT (ZIMCODD)

Resultantly, the Zimbabwe we want during and in the post COVID era should ensure that

- i. Social services, social protection and labour programs are adequately resourced in tandem with regional and internationally agreed principles
- ii. Government reclaims its obligations to public services provision namely education, health, water and sanitation
- iii. Government assesses best financing mechanisms, including examining the public borrowing option, on the basis of an analysis of the true costs and benefits of privatisation taking into account the full fiscal implications over the long-term and the risk comparison of each option;
- iv. There is effective regulation of private sector in areas where efficiency and profit can deliver sustainable outcomes for citizens and government i.e. transport
- v. The human rights entitlements of the people of Zimbabwe are observed and respected
- vi. There is clear rationale to engage private players in social services. Governments should not negate their role to provide social services as what is currently transpiring in Zimbabwe

1. <https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2020/03/29/esap-1990s-2000-2018-to-present-1/>
2. <https://zimlil.org/zw/legislation/num-act/2013/Amendment%20No.%2020%20of%20The%20Constitution%20of%20Zimbabwe/Constitution%20of%20Zimbabwe%20-%2020th%20Amendment%2022%20May%202013.pdf>
3. [ZIMBABWE INVESTMENT AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY ACT \[CHAPTER 14:37\]](https://www.tralac.org/documents/resources/by-country/zimbabwe/3168-zimbabwe-investment-development-agency-act-2019/file.html)
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8. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Joint%20Call%20for%20Action%20to%20Address%20the%20Impacts%20of%20Climate%20Change%20and%20a%20Deepening%20Humanitarian%20Crisis%20in%20Southern%20Africa.pdf>
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Adrian Chikowore is a Policy Analyst focussing on the International Public Finance in the Africa region. His work streams include Aid and Development Effectiveness, International Financial Institutions and Poverty Reduction and Public Private Partnerships in which he provides policy intelligence through policy research, advocacy and campaigns.



Safeguarding the social and economic rights of citizens during the COVID 19 pandemic and beyond.

Roselilly Ushewokunze,

On 11 March 2020 when the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the COVID -19 as a pandemic no one envisioned the social and economic degradation that would follow. This was a start of a historic economic and social melt down which has left billions of people vulnerable. Zimbabwe has not been spared in this scourge. New cases continues to rise. The government is failing to adequately deal with the outbreak as highlighted by its failure to meet testing demands, provide adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) as well as satisfactorily deal with the health sector wage crisis. Social and economic problems have been there since time immemorial, however the social and economic welfare of the citizens during this era is deplorable and has exposed serious inequalities and the fragility of the Government. As if this was not enough, the Zimbabwean government is caught up in allegations of corruption in the use of funds meant to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

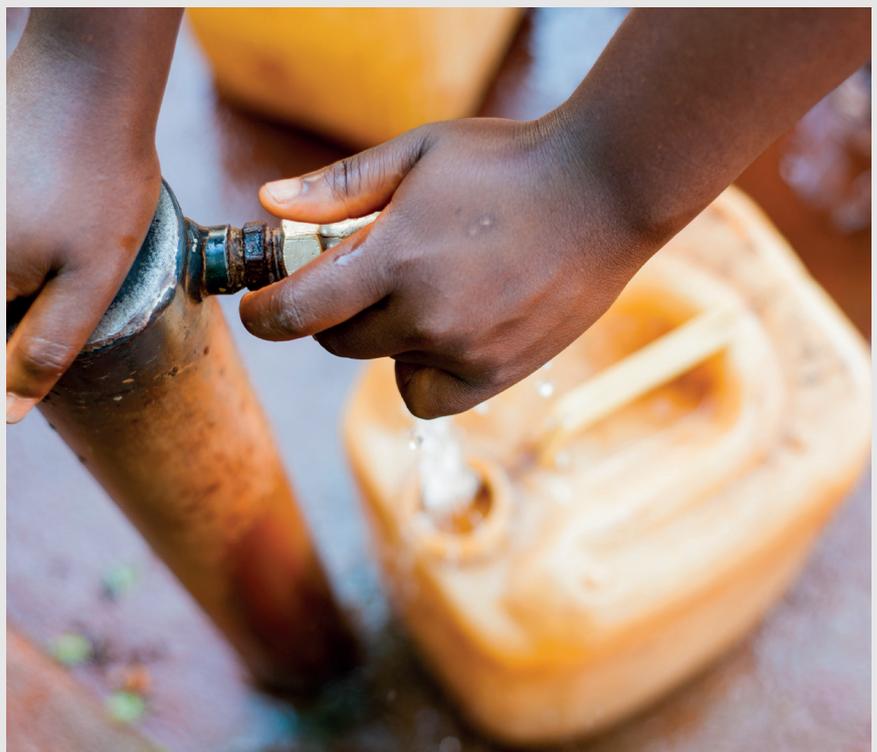
The COVID -19 pandemic has exposed the social and economic inequalities that can largely be attributed to our incomprehensive social protection systems. Vulnerable groups such as women, informal traders, people living with disabilities, food insecure families and those suffering from chronic illnesses have been left exposed and they bear the full brunt of the pandemic. It is imperative that we ask ourselves these questions, how do the vulnerable groups and the rest of the citizens stay afloat? and who is responsible for ensuring that their social and economic rights are granted?

Food security is a pertinent issue during this pandemic and beyond. The Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVac) estimates that 5.5 million people in the rural areas as well a 2.2 million in the urban areas are food insecure. When the lockdown was initiated in a bid to curb the spread of COVID-19, the government and the citizens alike were ill prepared to deal with food insecurities that emanated from the loss of livelihoods. The monthly COVID-19 relief package of \$ZWL 200 per household falls way far below the poverty datum line which stood at \$ZWL 7 426 (Zimstat:2020), In fact at that time it was just enough to buy 2,8 loaves of bread. The sincerity of the government in dealing with food security therefore became questionable.

The water shortages in most cities and towns are a cause for concern. One of the WHO guidelines in the prevention of the spread of the COVID-19 is to regularly wash hands with soap and water. The shortage of water has negated the efforts in fighting the spread of the virus. Rampant allegations of abuse of women and children have been reported at water points and campaigns such as Borehole diaries "Unearthing and addressing the hidden and complex Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) against girls and women at public

water collection points in Chitungwiza have clearly depicted the abuse that is happening as a result of government's failure to address the citizens water rights. Furthermore, women continue to bear the brunt of unpaid care work that comes with the extra burden of having to queue for water well into the night. Reports also suggest that women are giving sex in exchange for water, a threat to their Sexual Health and Reproductive Rights. Alternatively, women and children find themselves drawing water from unsafe sources such as burst water pipes. This is despicable considering that Zimbabwe is still recovering from the cholera outbreak of 2018. The summation of water rights violation also includes the commercialization of water; water is now being sold using the bidding style where the individual who offers more gets to buy. It is important to highlight that these are long standing issues that have not been addressed for decades.

Furthermore, communities are threatened by forced evictions which continue to take place in the face of such dire circumstances. According to Masvingo Centre for Research Advocacy and Development (MACRAD) over 300 people from Gutsaruzhinji village, ward 23, Chiredzi North were evicted in July after a land dispute. The villagers have since lost their sources of livelihood and remain vulnerable. The issue of forced evictions is a direct violation of human rights and highlights gross incompetency in those who are tasked with ensuring their protection. Against a background of micro and macro-economic woes, the Zimbabwean government has not been aggressive in trying to rectify the economic injustices that are ongoing. Since initiating a country wide lockdown on March 21 2020 the informal sector which is largely dominated by women is still yet to open. This has had a major impact





on informal traders and their families. The stimulus package announced on 4 May 2020 of ZWL\$18 Billion sounds quite ambitious as this is almost 9% of the country's GDP. It is still not clear how the citizens relief package of ZWL\$200 is being distributed.

The IMF estimates that Zimbabwe's real GDP will contract by 7.4 percent in 2020. This is a cause for concern because a GDP contraction of this magnitude is a clear indication of the catastrophe ahead. The general population will once more absorb the full impact of the contraction, in particular, the youth who make up 67% of the population will bear the consequences going forward.

Moreover, corruption and Illicit Financial Flows continue to haunt the country. The pandemic has allowed corruption and Illicit Financial Flows to flourish. Zimbabwe recently fired the health minister Obadiah Moyo over alleged involvement in a 60 million USD scandal meant to address the COVID -19 crisis. With Zimbabwe currently in debt distress (ZIMCODD 2020) and failing to service its debt, lending opportunities are thwarted therefore there is need to plug the flow of illicit funds.

The discussion above highlights the social and economic injustices currently faced by the Zimbabwean people but whose mandate is it to safe guard these rights? The government is obliged to ensure that the people's rights to a decent standard of living are maintained. These rights are absolute and binding to all people and at all times. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948, Article 25 (1) clearly states:

"Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control."

Therefore, under human law the Government is mandated to protect social and economic rights to its citizens. It must ensure everyone accesses social services and clearly outline non-discriminatory policies in these provisions. Countries with limited resources such as Zimbabwe are still obliged to meet its citizens provisions even during times of crisis. The social contract that exists between the citizens and the government should be reason enough for government to meet these needs. In as much as citizens have an obligation to pay taxes and meet their citizenry obligations set out by the constitution the government on the other hand should meet its end of the bargain and ensure fairness, constitutionalism, accountability and good governance.

Citizens must demand accountability from the government as these rights are basic and should not be mistaken for political nuisance. Civil Society Organisations must continue educating the citizens about their rights, the constitution and ways of engaging with the government to ensure their rights for all are observed. This will enable citizens to interrogate and speak out against injustices and further seek to correct them. Civic engagement and setting new narratives should be a priority during and beyond the pandemic.

Roselilly N. Ushewokunze is a Youth Social and Economic Justice Activist, based in Victoria Falls. Mat North



Understanding Zimbabwe's emerging domestic debt challenge – Post COVID-19

Tirivangani Mutazu,



Introduction

Domestic debt is defined as the “that debt the public sector (central government, local or provincial governments, state-owned enterprises and agencies whose borrowing is guaranteed by the central government) incurs through borrowing in its currency from residents and corporates of its country”(World Bank) However, in some cases foreign investors can also invest in domestic debt instruments of the government; in which case the government's obligations, therefore, are to foreigners, but in its own currency.

A people centred budget will;

There are so many reasons why governments borrow domestically. Below are some of the reasons:

- To finance the budget deficit when the government is not able to meet its expenditure commitments using domestically raised revenue and externally sourced grants and borrowing;
- Contracted for monetary policy implementation purposes through open market operations; and
- To promote the development and deepening of domestic financial markets.

How Domestic Debt is Acquired

The following are some of the ways and means (Instruments) governments use when borrowing domestically

- Issuance of government security papers e.g. treasury bills and bonds.
- Overdrafts or advances from the central bank.
- Payment arrears – outstanding payments to suppliers and parastatals for goods and services, and pension payments.
- Debt arising from privatizations - when government takes over the outstanding obligations of public enterprises that have been or are being privatized, normally referred to as debt assumption.
- Contingent Liabilities – obligations arising from government guarantees for borrowings and liabilities of regional and local governments, public and private sector enterprises
- Central bank bills and notes – issued for monetary policy purposes



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Zimbabwe domestic debt portfolio

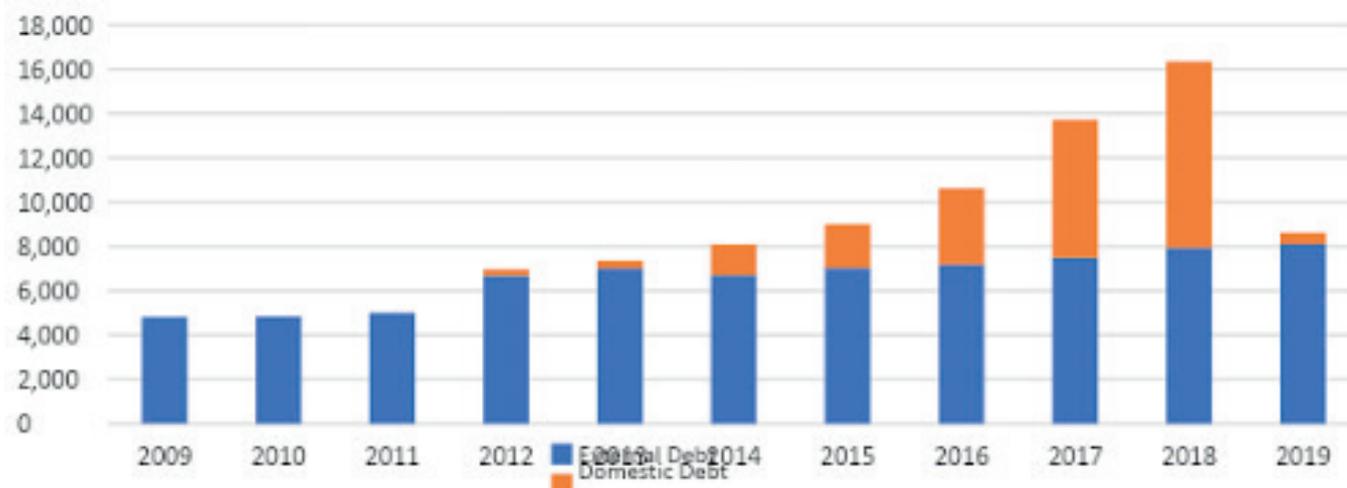
Zimbabwe’s total public and publicly guaranteed (PPG) debt at end 2019 was US\$11,091 million, representing 54% of GDP compared to US\$17,880 million registered in 2018 (Table 1). The sharp decrease in the stock of total debt denominated in USD terms is explained by the revaluation of domestic debt following the adoption of a new local currency called the RTGS dollar. The new currency and the subsequent depreciation led to a significant decline in domestic debt from US\$8,398 million (37% of GDP) in 2018 to US\$535 million (3% of GDP) in 2019. Consequently, PPG external debt constituted 95 percent of total public debt in 2019 while domestic debt was 5 percent compared to 41 percent and 37 percent in 2018, respectively. Figure 2 shows the composition of public debt over the past decade.

Table 1: Zimbabwe’s Total Public Publicly Guaranteed Debt (USD Million)

| | 2018 | 2019 |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| PUBLIC PUBLICLY GUARANTEED DEBT | 17,880 | 11,091 |
| EXTERNAL DEBT (INC. RBZ AND EXTERNAL ARREARS) | 9,482 | 10,556 |
| DOMESTIC DEBT (INC. DOMESTIC ARREARS) | 8,398 | 535 |

Source: Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
AFRODAD – 2020 Zimbabwe Annual Debt Report

Public Debt 2009 - 2019 (US\$ Million)



Source: Ministry of Finance and Economic Development

Before 2019, domestic debt was denominated in USD because of the 1:1 exchange rate peg between the USD and the Bond. In 2019, domestic debt declined in USD terms because of the adoption of a market determined exchange rate and the depreciation of the Zimbabwe dollar. Table 2 shows the composition of public domestic debt.

Table 2: Composition of Public Domestic Debt (USD million)

| | Total 2018 | Total 2019 |
|----------------------------------|--------------|------------|
| DOMESTIC DEBT | 8,398 | 535 |
| TREASURY BILLS AND BONDS | 8,213 | 530 |
| BUDGET FINANCING | 933 | 72 |
| GOVERNMENT DEBT | 3,071 | 131 |
| RBZ ASSUMED DEBT | 292 | 11 |
| CAPITALISATION OF SOES | 149 | 8 |
| ZAMCO | - | 64 |
| RBZ CAPITALISATION | 110 | 6 |
| RESTRUCTURED DEBT | - | 238 |
| RBZ (NOT ISSUED WITH TBS) | 28 | - |
| OVERDRAFT FACILITY | 2,934 | - |
| LOANS (CENTRAL BANK) | 696 | - |
| DOMESTIC ARREARS | - | 238 |

Source: Ministry of Finance and Economic Development

AFRODAD – 2020 Zimbabwe Annual Debt Report

Treasury continued to issue domestic debt instruments to meet budget financing needs. Current Treasury policy is to limit the issuance of domestic debt securities by targeting a balanced budget. In order to promote domestic market development, improve transparency and increase competition, the Government introduced an auction system for issuance of treasury bills in July 2019. The Zimbabwean government has over the years taken over the obligations of guaranteed entities/individual beneficiaries in various agriculture support programmes. Since 2005 the government has launched various supportive programmes to boost agricultural production, which included (i) Agricultural Sector Enhancement Productivity Facility (ASPEF) worth more than US\$114 million, (ii) Operation Maguta with over US\$41 million and (iii) Local Authorities Reorientation Programme (PLARP) where local governments accessed at least ZW\$1 trillion under the Parastatals. Other programmes followed in 2007 and 2008, such as the Mechanization Programme for mechanising agriculture production and improve crop yield per hectare and the Basic Commodities Supply Side Intervention (BACCOSSI) to alleviate the acute shortages of goods in supermarkets through giving households food hampers, respectively. However, most of these programmes invested millions of dollars but failed on implementation and government took over the debts.



COVID-19 support scheme

Under the ZWL\$18 billion Economic Recovery and Stimulus Package adopted by government - government guarantees are amounting to ZWL\$ 2.5 billion and ZWL\$500 million is being availed to support the manufacturing and tourism sectors, respectively, may continue worsen Zimbabwe's public debt in the event that the Government assumes such obligations in the case of default. Currently there is no framework for managing contingent liabilities.

There are different perspectives on the growth effects of public domestic debt in any given economy. These include the positives and the negatives.

Positives

- i. Issuing of domestic debt can help the government achieve its funding and growth objectives in the presence of a stable macroeconomic environment, political certainty and a developed financial system.
- ii. Moderate levels of noninflationary domestic debt as a share of GDP and bank deposits can exert a positive overall impact on economic growth (Abbas & Christensen, 2007).
- iii. There is an optimal level of domestic debt that is promotive of growth, once that is exceeded it then becomes detrimental to growth (Domestic Debt/GDP: -15-20% IMF/WB thresholds).
- iv. the growth contribution of domestic debt is higher if the debt is marketable, bears positive real interest rates and is held outside the banking system.

Negatives

- i. The burden of domestic debt can slow down the economy
- ii. As compared to external debt which can be sourced at low & cheap concessionary rates, domestic debt is generally expensive in nature
- iii. In most cases its servicing can account for a large proportion of government revenue which can diminish the scope for public spending on desirable items such as health, education and infrastructure.
- iv. Excessive domestic debt servicing can also "crowd out public sector investment on infrastructure and other socio-economic development projects"
- v. Excessive domestic debt can also be inflationary
- vi. If the government finances its deficit by borrowing too much from the central bank-through money creation- it can stoke up inflation-negatively affect the welfare of citizens
- vii. If not properly managed, domestic debt levels can be built to levels where they become unsustainable, there precipitating an economic crisis

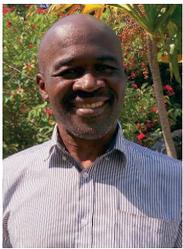
Conclusion

The above possible negative impacts of domestic debt necessitate the critical need for promoting domestic debt sustainability to ensure, the compatibility of domestic debt and the achievement of the national development goals.

Given that the government is funding Economic Recovery and Stimulus Package through domestic borrowing and on lending to private sector and fund unproductive social programmes, there is need to ensure that domestic borrowings are used for productive purposes that can generate resources commensurate with the servicing obligations, given the expensive nature of domestic debt.

There is need for government to put in place a framework for managing contingent liabilities; strengthen the oversight role of the Parliament on domestic debt acquisition, and ensure that domestic debt issues are anchored on constitutional provisions.

Tirivangani Mutazu is a Senior Policy Analyst at AFRODAD responsible for Debt Management



Taking stock of the Covid pandemic care burden on women and young girls

Masimba Manyanya,



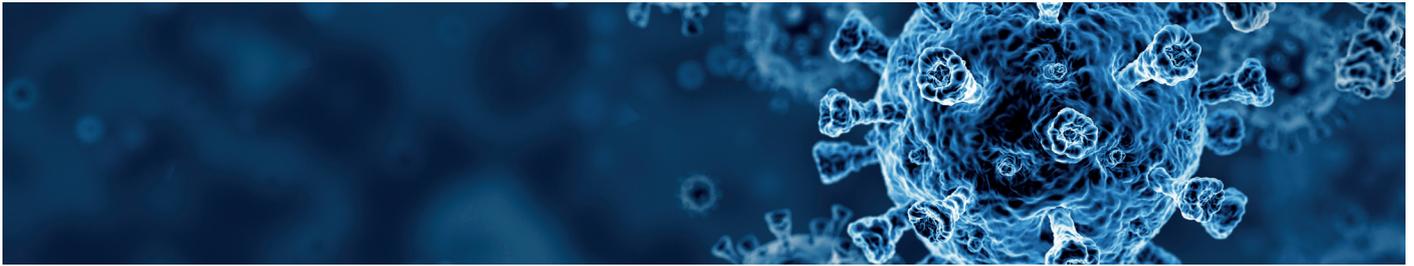
Differential Impacts of COVID19

Since its outbreak in late 2019, the COVID-19 has imposed drastic social and economic impacts across the world. Studies by the John Hopkins Institute show that by June 2020 there were, globally, 9.8 million COVID 19 positive cases, with 500 deaths in 215 countries and territories. The world's economic, social, health and welfare systems are under great pressure. Innovations in different parts of the world to help communities cope with the multiple, adverse effects of the pandemic have proven inadequate to address the underlying and structural factor behind the global reality of weakened health and social protection measures. Different studies highlight adverse impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic on global value chains, and debt sustainability outlook across the globe.

COVID 19 has diverse and deep consequences in Africa, where economic, health and welfare institutions are poorly developed

and therefore weak. Africa's population structure, (with the majority 51%, being female and 60% being youths), implies differential social impacts of the pandemic. These statistics mean that approximately 85450 women, and 100529 young people are exposed to COVID 19 in SADC. This works out to 7.5 million women and also 9 million youths in Zimbabwe. The implications are a need for appropriate interventions targeting these population groups.

The prevalence of COVID19 across SADC is shows South Africa is the worst affected with 90% of the total cases, and 89.7% of the total mortalities. After South Africa the DRC is next on the list of worst affected countries, with 4.2% of the cases, and 5.7% of the deaths. Zimbabwe the figures are 0.35% and 0.2% respectively.



COVID19 Response Mechanisms

For an average African country setup, it is possible to envisage two basic levels whereby society grapples with the COVID pandemic. First, is the Government level, for reasons pertaining to availability to, or access to information, and also the opportunity of institutional resources; financial, fiscal, technical or human in dealing with the pandemic. Government can be proactive, rather than reactive in its responses to COVID19 as they are more exposed to regional and global developments, and they have at their disposal policy instruments they can use to protect or advance the interest or welfare of the nation.

“Weak governance and policy institutions in Africa are an extreme liability particularly for women and youths...”

A key distinction in terms of institutional capacities to effectively respond to COVID can be drawn between the more economically developed countries and the poor African and Latin American countries. The ability of developed states to provide financial and food handouts to population sectors most vulnerable to COVID 19 highlights the pertinent value of investments in strong economic, administrative and governance institutions that are transparent and effective in protecting citizens from future harm and calamities. (Bromfield L, et al 2010, IMF 2020). Weak governance and policy institutions in Africa are an extreme liability particularly for women and youths, as large sections of local populations. Confidence in economic governance institutions is also critical in garnering population support for Government programs such COVID 19 programs.

In a recent publication, International Monetary Fund revised its 2020 economic growth estimates for the SADC from 3.1% to -3% due to the COVID 19 pandemic. This downward revision by 6% implies reduced budgetary revenues, which further means that health budgetary allocations in the region are under further strain for the period under observation. Historically, the SADC region is characterised by weak safety nets and high exposure of vulnerable population groups to various adverse public debt, economic effects as well as natural hazards.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, and for reasons largely pertaining to fiscal constraints, Government of Zimbabwe failed to develop a proper infrastructure for testing COVID 19. This

meant that the Government of Zimbabwe had to rely more on administrative (mostly police and army) mechanisms to reduce the risk of transmission across the country. Across SADC the failure of countries to provide COVID related financial or food handouts to vulnerable population sectors highlights serious economic policy and governance challenges in the region.

At the second level are community/family COVID19 Response mechanisms. COVID responses at the community and family level tend to be more inward looking, reactive rather than proactive, and constrained by limited access to resources. For these reasons communities and families will tend to depend on the leadership and external supports of Government. High illiteracy, limited information, and resource constraints and poverty at the community and family level exposes large sections the population to the COVID 19 related risks.



Concluding Observations

The continued vulnerability of women and young girls in African countries, in the context of the COVID 19 pandemic highlights key learning points on the value of strong economic and policy institutions on the continent. The shared population characteristics of SADC countries points to the urgent need in the region to invest in strong development institutions to reduce population exposure to hazards and calamities, whilst representing and advancing the general interest and welfare of society.

Masimba Manyanya is a development economist and author with 16 years' experience in Zimbabwe's public sector, including the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Community and Cooperative Development, and Ministry of Finance. He shares a passion for social and economic justice, and in this regard, he has since the late 1990s worked closely as a policy activist with the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), and the Zimbabwe Coalition for Debt and Development (ZIMCODD)



The Generational gap – a deprivation of social and economic justice to young people.

Thomas Gwanzura



Differential Impacts of COVID19

For decades Zimbabwe and other African countries have been affected by a generational gap, where youth have been excluded from enjoying their various social and economic rights. A generation gap is a difference of opinions between one generation and the other relating to beliefs, politics, or values (Clapham 2012). It can also refer to a perceived gap between younger people and their parents or grandparents. In Zimbabwe, there is a disconnect between the liberation generation and the new generation, the old guard leaders in our countries have been overtaken by the demands of this generation. Youth therefore, have been deprived of their right to fully enjoy social and economic rights. Youth have suffered ever since through lack on inclusion in development policies and implementation of these policies.



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Unemployment has been on the rise and economic privileges have always fallen away from youth of today. These negative effects have left many of us youth to become educated vendors and entrepreneurs. The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the impact and the effects already facing youth. Many Governments have taken that opportunity to further the generational gap, and stiffening its policies. Social rights on freedoms to demonstrate, the right expression among others have continued to be hardened leaving youth of Zimbabwe without space to freely express their needs and boldly speak on their socio-economic interests.

The post-COVID-19 era like many other non-pandemic years requires inclusion of youth in the policy process. Transparency should not have any social boundaries and our leaders should be cognisant of the need to appreciate the new world order which is favourable and flexible to youth in Zimbabwe.

The need to safeguard power through liberation gains though fundamental, it should be further consolidated with new innovations and ideas that are not related to political implications. The youth should be relevant after the COVID-19 pandemic and as economies open up. Our leaders should therefore see and appreciate the role of youth in social and economic development. There is need for our leaders to address social inequalities where youth have become

a discriminated group through the gap that is appearing between the old leaders and the youth generation. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the ills and unfair treatment of youth in Zimbabwe. Hence, government should take note of these challenges and reconcile finding solutions to these problems.

In conclusion, the generational gap has had negative implications on youth fully enjoying social and economic rights. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed these negative impacts as many unemployed youth have failed to fully enjoy social and economic rights. Many challenges that youth faced during the pandemic are a result of being excluded in many development agendas and implementation of policies that affect their socio-economic lives.

Thomas Gwanzura is a 26 year old youth. He is a holder of a social science degree in Peace and Governance from Bindura University of Science Education. Thomas has worked as a research assistant with PHD students and other publishers.



Political Literacy: Lessons drawn from the COVID-19 Pandemic

Delroy Clyde Mahove,



THE ZIMBABWE COALITION ON DEBT AND DEVELOPMENT (ZIMCODD)

There has never been a time in Zimbabwe where civic consciousness has been greatly required than the days we are living in today. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed all sorts of rot within the government, corporate sector and the public sector. Massive corruption is being unearthed, activists and journalists are being arrested and state institutions are being abused left, right and centre!

Yet, the people are still not acting accordingly to these developments. Social media has been an avenue for citizen disgruntlement regarding how the COVID-19 pandemic has been handled in the country. Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp have been the most used social media platforms, but all the hashtags and the threads have seemed futile. Keyboard activism and the fight for social justice, and against corruption is not yielding significant results on the ground.

It is quite clear that people want to be heard, want to see their problems addressed and solved amicably. So where are we getting it wrong? Why, despite all the noises in the media, nothing seems to be changing? The answer, as I have come to believe, lies within universalizing the Political literacy discourse. Yes, there has been an effort by organizations like Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD), Section 20 and others that are engaged with civic education but the ignorance displayed by most of the citizens leaves a lot to be desired. As such, a vigorous approach to political education is a top priority as we move forward from the

COVID 19 pandemic. The pandemic has disrupted society as we know it, which presents us with the opportunity to transform and shape society in the image we all want - a just & corruption free society.

Political literacy, in laymen terms, involves the understanding of the interconnected nature of democracy, power relations, and participatory citizenship. When citizens are taught and made to understand this concept, it is easier for them to understand power relations and how it operates in unison with their everyday lives. It is at the backdrop of such an understanding that citizens can be meaningfully involved with the resolution of conflict in government,

law and civil society. It is then that citizens can incorporate pragmatism in dealing with issues of corruption & graft, misgovernance and human rights abuse in Zimbabwe. So, why not introduce the younger generation to political education and build a generation that is conscious, informed and action driven? I strongly believe that the introduction of political education in our school curriculums will, over the years, increase political engagement amongst the masses. It is very difficult to lie and defraud people who have knowledge of a particular subject and who are well vested in the processes involved. Several individuals walk free after being charged with corruption or infringing the rights of other citizens because most of us do not know the power we yield in the pursuit of justice. With a basic understanding of political processes and avenues of pushing for social and economic justice in our society, I foresee a better nation with a vibrant citizenry that engages progressively in dealing with all forms of taboos in the governance of its nation. Occurrences such as the former Local Government minister Ignatious Chombo's corruption scandal, the alleged disappearance of



activist Itai Dzamara, the former Health minister Obediah Moyo's COVID 19 saga and alleged abduction of the MDC Alliance women and recent arrests of ZINASU leaders can be reduced and avoided as long as the people are "woke" as the youth call it. Corruption, human rights abuse and oppression only thrive in a society with ignorant people. Democracy and political literacy go hand in hand meaning, enhancing democracy through political education is enhancing social and economic justice.

There are undoubtedly several more cases of corruption within the government and human rights abuse in the wake of the COVID



19 pandemic. Everyone is alert and paying attention but not everyone is politically informed to deal with the situation. If we all continue as we were, corruption is only going to get worse, more activists and advocates of democracy are going to be persecuted.

As I believe, we should all call for the mandatory inclusion of political education courses in at least our Ordinary, Advanced and tertiary levels just as we do with Information technology, communication skills, gender and entrepreneurship. The solution will probably not produce instant results but in the long term we all will reap the seeds we will sow by incorporating political education in our academic system. Without any doubt, political education has a very real effect on everybody's life, regardless of our opinions and it will do us a great deal in dealing with corruption and all forms of social and economic ills in the post COVID 19 Zimbabwe.

Delroy Clyde Mahove is a Social and Economic Justice Ambassador, Political Literacy Researcher and a Marxist-Leninist. He is a Politics and Public Management graduate with experience in social justice advocacy, trade unionism, community development and political education.

September 2020

Open Letter to SADC Leaders,



Dear SADC Leaders,

We the social movements, progressive groups, and the civil society at large united under the banner of the Southern African People Solidarity Network (SAPSN) write this open letter to you to express our deepest concern at the intolerable mass suffering of our people.

The COVID pandemic crisis has made an already difficult situation worse for the Region's masses. More than 40 million SADC citizens in 13 countries are going hungry. At least four out of every ten SADC citizens do not have access to safe drinking water. Six out of ten citizens in our region cannot access adequate sanitation services in spite of the life-threatening dangers of Covid-19. Overwhelmed public education systems have left the majority of the Region's children out of school for months on end leaving many vulnerable children especially young girls exposed to sexual violence and abuse. Increased burdens on frail public health systems and demotivated health professionals puts the lives of millions at risk every single day. The imposition of austerity measures and cutbacks to public service delivery disproportionately affects the poor while local elites live in the fluff of luxury. This tells us that Inequality is fundamentally a result of political choices.

Policy choices to deregulate our economies, privatise public goods and services, provide generous and harmful incentives to transnational capital, accrue bad debts and weaken democratic oversight have left most countries in the region unprepared to address major crises, shocks and disruptions.

We must remind you, that the burden of care left by underfunded, unpredictable and under-staffed public service delivery systems unjustly falls on the shoulders of struggling women and the household care economy. Most of these women and households draw their livelihoods from the informal economy and small holder agriculture. As such, it pains us that whilst transnational, agrarian, speculative and extractive capital continues operations with limited disruption, Cross boarder traders, smallholder farmers, vendors and the working poor are losing income due to boarder closures and restrictive lockdown regulations which unfairly target and at times criminalises the informal economy. How do you expect these people to earn a living and survive when they cannot trade freely?

We shudder as our debt distressed governments continue to funnel scarce public resources to service debts without



clear debt sustainability plans at a time when our children are hungry, young people are without jobs and the elderly and vulnerable lack adequate care or social protection.

Again, we are enraged by the wholesale pillaging of our natural resources, public tenders and economic opportunities to enrich elites through corruption and Illicit Financial Flows in the name of private sector led development. Leaders, you must not renege on your duty to protect, promote and fulfil the fundamental human rights your citizens and leave our collective future in the hands of predatory capital and vested interests.

Growing insecurity in the region as evidenced by the unresolved military conflicts in Eastern DRC and Northern Mozambique as well as declining democratic conditions in several countries expose the illusion of peace in the Region. And now as some leaders amass emergency powers without clear checks and balances or timeframes to restore constitutional order, we strongly urge the reinvigoration of Regional monitoring and accountability mechanisms to guide the use of emergency powers during crisis periods and a stop to the weaponization of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We had hoped that you would take the opportunity of the recent SADC Heads of State Summit to announce a people centred post-COVID response and recovery plan for the Region. To our collective dismay, SADC has missed an opportunity to marshal the resources, ideas and political will to address the citizens' suffering and hardships.

- We therefore call upon you, as our Leaders, to help the masses cope with the COVID pandemic by increasing the resources available to shore up overwhelmed public health, education, social protection and other key public services through a coordinated SADC COVID Response Fund.
- Secondly, we urge you to recover our sovereignty to decide our own shared future by reversing the unaccountable power, benefits, access and influence given to vested interests, foreign and domestic lenders, investors and donors. Instead we ask you to prioritise income guarantees, inclusive financing and other support measures to mitigate the loss of income and livelihood opportunities for Cross-boarder Traders, smallholder food producers and workers in the informal sector.
- Thirdly we ask that you listen more to Citizens by facilitating the structured inclusion of representative Non-State Actors in regional disaster-risk preparedness and response mechanisms.
- Again, we ask you to address growing insecurity in the Region by resolving the underlying causes of conflict in the region embedded in unaddressed historical conflicts and the unfair distribution of natural resources and economic opportunities.
- Lastly, we urge you to break the cycle of indebtedness by strengthening oversight, accountability and transparency in loan contraction and debt management through effective common Regional frameworks to guide engagements with multi-lateral and private lending Institutions.

We await to hear how you plan to deal with the issues and questions raised in this letter even as we look forward to contribute to people centred post-COVID response and recovery plans.

Another Southern Africa is possible,

Boaventura Monjane
Convenor, SADC People's Summit 2020
Mozambique Civil Society Alliance

Janet Zhou
Secretary General
Southern African People's Solidarity Network



Make A Stand

Mufaro Mpofu,

“Unless we stand for something, we shall fall for anything”

– Rev. Peter Marshall,



The global pandemic of COVID-19, brought about anxiety and mental stress across different age groups. In Zimbabwe, the impact was worse due to the social and economic problems and fragility of the health system

The pandemic exposed the worrisome state of our health system which needs urgent attention and adequate funding. Health personnel who were on the frontlines of responding to the pandemic were put on risk without adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) and a number have been reported to have contracted the virus whilst on duty. The lack of PPEs in most facilities resulted in a number of people being turned away for medical assistance as fear of getting the virus grew.

In terms of restrictive measures, the government responded by following what other countries were doing, that is calling for a national lockdown, with movement and gathering restrictions. However, the enforcement mechanism violated a number of legal provisions that promote social and economic freedoms. Restricted movements prevented people from attending Constitutional amendments meetings. Although alternative methods of sending contributions via WhatsApp was introduced to address the challenges brought by restrictions on gatherings, this approach excluded many people considering the high data tariffs in Zimbabwe. The repressive nature of the law enforcement agents prevented people from buying basic social amenities, as was agreed upon by the stipulated lockdown conditions.

As a way of trying to combat the spread of the virus, the government responded by granting tenders to companies to supply protective equipment. It is alleged that proper tender procedures were not followed, hence lack of transparency and accountability.

Speculations were made concerning the granting of mineral rights at the Hwange National Park as unusual and an act that was done under the cover of the lockdown where due processes were simply short circuited. This move which has since been challenged and revised threatened the biodiversity already under threat from climate change.

During the pandemic, an article was published naming the beneficiaries of the RBZ Farm Mechanization Scheme which was ran by the



Central Bank in 2007 and 2008. A huge number of the beneficiaries failed to pay back the amount for reasons best known by them. This raises questions concerning a more similar scheme named Command Agriculture, whose beneficiaries and the benefits remained a close guarded secret. This then cements the public fears that, like its predecessor, the program is aimed at enriching few elite members at the expense of well deserving members of the community.

In the Post COVID-19 period, it is of great importance for every citizen to participate in shaping the national discourse through active participation in public policy issues and demanding rights guaranteed in the Constitution. Active participation in the budget making process is a must. The starting point could be participating in local council meetings and demanding from local Members of Parliament how community development fund is being disbursed.

Citizens must demand institutions such as the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption to be accountable and do their constitutional duty and curb the systematic corruption which is partly to blame for the under development of the country. With COVID-19 accelerating the need to embrace technology and reduce the need for physical meeting, adopting an electronic filling of tender papers will be the best solution to curb corruption and stop “tender-prenuership”.

Community members must ensure that they participate and are involved when investors prospect in their areas and ensure resources are raised in a good progressive manner, to their benefit. It is of importance to ensure local resources are not mortgaged to foreigners who are not willing to invest in ways that also benefit the citizens. Citizens must demand to know how much these investors are worth.

Post COVID-19, the government must show a more determined approach to ensure the realization of social-economic rights and partner with local communities. One lesson that can be borrowed from this pandemic is that, with teamwork and willingness everyone can achieve more. It is the duty of citizens to hold the government accountable, demand transparency as provided by section 298(1) of the Constitution.

For Zimbabwe to progress there is need for improved transparency and accountability and this is something that everyone should yearn for and everyone must make a stand and play. During this Covid-19 period, there is need to re-think citizen participation that is adaptable and flexible to the “new normal”.

Mufaro Mpfu is a practising Attorney and a Social and Economic Justice Ambassador



Residents must take Charge!

Darlington Madzonga,



THE ZIMBABWE COALITION ON DEBT AND DEVELOPMENT (ZIMCODD)

Emerging from the Covid19 lockdown there are lesson learnt for residents and residents' associations in the country. Pre lockdown, residents were leaving their oversight role of overseeing how their cities and towns are managed to elected officials. When the lockdown was first announced in March 2020 residents had a blackout of the happenings in their cities and towns in terms of service delivery. Issues of service delivery

were now being imposed on them without consultations and involvement. The blackout on the social and economic activities of councils provided an opportunity for residents to do more. In this article I will deal with some of the take-home lessons for residents and residents associations post COVID-19. This is hinged in the establishment of functioning Ward Development Committees.



Residents must make sure that they have properly functioning Ward Development Committees (WADCO) in their respective Wards. Through the Ward retention funds released by councils to residents, Ward Development Committees can assist the vulnerable members of the community with food and other necessities such as face masks and sanitizers for use at public places like water points. WADCOs can be instrumental in the formation and supervision of health clubs in a particular Ward. These clubs will coordinate various patients and assist them to access healthcare services in difficult times like lockdown. A good example of these health clubs can coordinate patients under Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ART) to access their drugs without hustles leading them to defaulting.

The lockdown period has seen the deterioration of service delivery after several councillors were recalled throughout the country. Residents were left without representation in difficult and demanding times. This is the time WADCOs are important to be the go between council and residents. With WADCOs in place residents will get engaged in various council activities such as feedback meetings and budget consultations. WADCO members are for the community by the community meaning their life cannot be terminated unceremoniously. They also open opportunities for inclusiveness, hence tackling

social inequalities. Men, women youths and marginalized groups must be well represented in these committees.

Water and sewage reticulation are the major challenges facing most residents in Zimbabwe. Residents need to keep in contact with council officials to access water and report sewer blockages. The emergence of boreholes in cities has brought with it many challenges. Residents are required to pay for water treatment chemicals for these boreholes. Lockdown regulations such as maintenance of social distance and use of sanitizers are some. Misunderstandings have been witnessed between Water Points Committees and residents. The presence of a functioning WADCO will minimize these disputes and improve service delivery leading to enjoyment of social and economic justice rights.

The lockdown period saw the collapse of most economic activities and this affected livelihood of most residents particularly those in the informal sector. The fact that market stalls were closed, and some destroyed means most residents were not able to pay their bills to local authorities. This situation was exacerbated by the government moratorium on rentals. The key lesson learnt here is that council survived on rates meaning during this period they borrowed and incur debts in order to mitigate

the pandemic. This was done without the consent of residents through their elected officials. In the absence of WADCOs debt was incurred on behalf of residents without being consulted. WADCOs will be very influential in tracking budgets and debts incurred by council officials.

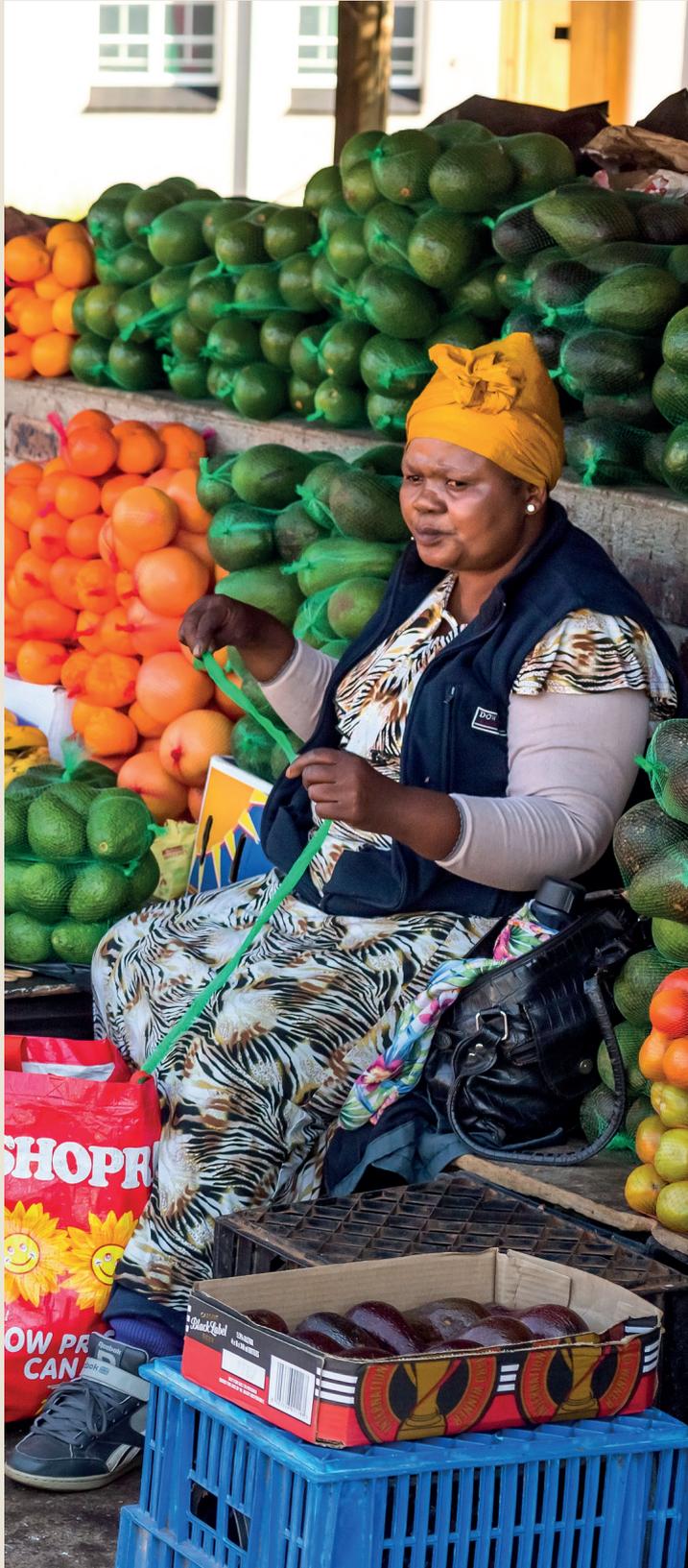
Going forward it is fundamentally important for residents to organize themselves towards improved social service delivery. WADCOs are community centered and focused. They will complement the work being done by councillors and council officials. Since members are drawn from the community there is abundance of community focus for development. The ideology remains that local authorities are owned by residents hence residents should take charge. COVID-19 a lesson learnt!

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Vendors Lives and Livelihoods Matter

Eric Chikukwa



THE ZIMBABWE COALITION ON DEBT AND DEVELOPMENT (ZIMCODD)

Introduction

On March 17, 2020 President Mnangagwa declared Coronavirus a National Disaster. Six days later on 24 March a raft of measures were announced to assist in containing the spread of the Corona virus. Among those measures was the closure of all land borders, only allowing freight to pass. This necessary move, however, had huge implications for the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of cross border traders.

The Border Closures

The economy and the social fabric of the region are dependent on cross-border flow of goods and people, and hence the impact of border closures for Informal Cross Border Traders (ICBT), who live subsistence existences reliant on cross-border trade for survival and already living below the poverty datum line, may be as severe as, or worse than, the impact of COVID-19.

Most border closures have been imposed with little regional coordination within SADC and COMESA. For instance, curfew times often vary between neighboring countries, compounding their economic impacts. With informal trade interrupted, many ICBT have had little opportunity to find alternative livelihoods.

It is incomprehensible how the ICBT have therefore found themselves outside all measures undertaken by government to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on Zimbabweans. It's as though traders' lives don't matter.

Lockdowns

The government began a nationwide lockdown on March 30, which was slightly eased and extended indefinitely on May 16. The lockdown confined millions of people reliant on informal economic activities to their homes.

For households dependent on ICBT income. the lockdown

therefore meant being 'locked-out' of their livelihoods. Essentially, the lockdown decision led to the expansion and strengthening of networks of 'informality' among various ICBT players who have resorted to illicit ways of continuing with their businesses. A flood of media reports have shown that goods have been smuggled through undesignated points from South Africa to Zimbabwe, and vice versa since lockdowns were imposed.

On 4 May 2020, a further relaxing of the lockdown was announced through Statutory Instrument 99 of 2020, which set out the re-opening procedure for businesses (Government of Zimbabwe, 2020). A key but sour point for ICBT in the re-opening procedure included proving that the business is formal, as indicated by any one of the following:

- i. Having a shop license or other operating license; or
- ii. Having a formal lease; or
- iii. Being registered with the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA); or
- iv. Being part of a recognised National Employment Council (NEC).

These measures clearly had nothing for the ICBT who are in the main not registered and who also expected a partial re-opening of land borders.

To its credit on May 4, 2020, the government, through the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, announced a ZW\$18 billion, about 9% of Zimbabwe's GDP, Covid-19 economic recovery and stimulus package.

The stimulus package outlined measures to provide liquidity support to several sectors including small and medium enterprises leaving out cross border traders.

Unfortunately, the operational mechanisms of implementation of the stimulus fund were designed to push out the majority of ICBT players as distribution of the SME support funds was through the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Corporation (SMEDCO), the Zimbabwe Women's Microfinance Bank, popularly known as Women's Bank and Empowerment

Bank. However, the entities mentioned have not been accessible especially for informal economy actors, mainly because of too many strings attached, chief among which is the need for collateral security. Historically women, who make up 70% of ICBT, have had inequitable access to assets and hence they struggle to raise the collateral required. Furthermore, from the minister's statement, it appeared that the stimulus package was only meant to be accessed by registered SMEs, and yet, many informal cross border traders are not registered.

However, to ensure that 'no one is left behind' the operational modalities of implementing the 'COVID-19 Economic Recovery and Stimulus Package should have taken into consideration the needs of unregistered ICBT by working with ICBT associations to help unregistered traders to also access this critical funding, while at the same time assisting them regularize their registration.

The Implications for the country's future

Post-COVID-19 generally, there is the likelihood of further pressure on the informal economy as high rates of formal unemployment are significant in pushing people into the informal economy and informal cross-border trade.

One lesson we have learnt as we go towards some normalcy is that lockdown templates used by developed countries with formalised food supply systems, and with the capacity to extend social safety net interventions are bound to be fraught with challenges if they are adopted by poorer countries, like Zimbabwe, with little or no adaption to local contexts.

As the possibility for the re-opening of the borders continue to grow our behaviour as a nation begs scrutiny and the period between 29 April and 2 May is of particular interest.



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On the 29th of April, the government published a report which revealed that the number of infections had gone up to 40, but revised down the number to 34, after it was found that the “6 cases from Harare previously recorded as positive on 29 April have been confirmed negative after Quality Assurance” (Ministry of Health, 2020).

The previous week, the government had again revised the statistics downwards after “a case from the second city of Bulawayo was counted twice” (The Standard, 2020). These mistakes may seem trivial, but they have huge implications for the future of ICBT activities when borders eventually reopen.

Such errors raise questions on Zimbabwe’s handling of the COVID-19 pandemic especially on the testing process thereby reducing public confidence (including of many ICBT destinations) on the country’s public health system. It is, therefore, likely that when neighbouring countries begin to relax regional travel restrictions, Zimbabwean cross border traders may be subjected to strict screening procedures at the ports of entry or Zimbabwe COVID-free Certificates may not be recognized by other countries in the process negatively affecting the livelihoods of many Zimbabweans.

Post COVID: Restoring Livelihoods and building Resilience

However post-COVID-19 recovery of ICBT activities will not only depend on the Zimbabwean government, but they will also be determined by public health measures put in place in the countries where Zimbabwean informal cross-border traders buy their wares. It is, therefore, critical that the country maintains COVID-19 testing protocols and reporting procedures that engender confidence. Otherwise, informal cross-border traders from Zimbabwe will be subjected to unnecessary screening processes at the port of entries of countries that they travel to buy their goods in the near future.

On a positive note it is heart-warming to see that Tripartite partners have decided to bat in the corner of ICBTs. On 29 July 2020 COMESA, EAC and SADC published the

“TRIPARTITE GUIDELINES ON TRADE AND TRANSPORT FACILITATION FOR THE MOVEMENT OF PERSONS, GOODS AND SERVICES ACROSS THE TRIPARTITE REGION DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC”

to guide governments on how borders can re-open in a COVID-compliant manner.

Some of the recommendations of the Guidelines are:

- i. Reduction in number of passengers in a bus, mini-bus or other vehicle and enforcement of public health measures of 1 metre distance apart;
- ii. Provision of WHO recommended hygiene facilities on the vehicle, at the bus terminuses, borders and other places the cross-border buses may stop;
- iii. Completion of travel history questionnaires by passengers/travellers and ensuring that completed travel history forms are submitted to Port Health Officials.

Apart from the Tripartite guidelines the following can also be adopted to allow traders to resume trading:

- i. If the government is not ready to partially reopen official border crossings to informal traders on foot it should facilitate the consolidation, transportation and clearance of small-scale traders' goods, and extend social relief to informal traders through cross-border traders associations.
- ii. Inclusive financial mediation should be extended to ICBT to aid recovery and build their resilience in the face of future pandemics or other disruptive events.

It's time for the government to demonstrate, in word and deed, that the economic and social well-being of ICBT matters.

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Collective efforts are vital to curb inequality in Zimbabwe

Evernice Tayisepi,



Since the honeymoon period (immediate post liberation era) corruption, homelessness, low living wages, spousal abuse, militarism, environmental injustice, unfair public education, compromised welfare, human rights violations and violence has defined the state of Zimbabwe, yet the country is rich in ideology and potential to fix the socio-economic justice crisis. As long as these exist, the nation will continue to suffer an inherited debt and the disease of social and economic injustice, a virus which is currently bedevilling especially the young generation, crushing and shattering potential. Worsened by the Covid-19 pandemic which expanded the gap between the rich and the poor, it takes collective efforts to curb this inequality disease. Also, the multi-currency system formulated a huge gap between employees, whereby some are paid in local currency at a low value whilst a small percentage of the workforce is paid in the United State currency at a better value.



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Inequality in the distribution of income displays the characteristics of a trend in Zimbabwe, having affected large numbers of people, from the poorest to the most affluent. There is also greater inequality in the distribution of remunerated employment, with worsening unemployment and underemployment in all parts of the country affecting a disproportionate number of people at the lower end of the socio-economic scale.

The goal of transparency and progressive taxation is to remedy income inequality which apparently causes Social injustices, because the standard of life one has is determined by how much the person or stakeholder of the family gets. Progressive taxation is vital to remedy income inequality and provide funds for all social services, public infrastructure and education, because economic issues facing the country and world economy at large require the pooling together of resources to fund collective actions towards the public good. For instance, in this covid-19 pandemic era it is not all children who are getting the access to online learning resources and tutorials which hence marks a very huge margin between the advantaged

and the disadvantaged in terms of earnings. It has to be dealt with as this exacerbates social inequality amongst the victims of circumstance and the privileged. Progressive taxation that allows for public resources to be attained as a matter of human rights can then bridge the social and economic justice gaps

Scarcity of resources due to economic strains, very low incomes, unemployment especially amongst the youths who are the future of tomorrow, the leaders and forefathers of the nation, leads to stunt in everything because people then would not be knowing things like what to produce, how to produce, from whom to produce and what provisions are to be made for economic growth.

Equal access to opportunities and resources required to meet basic needs and develop fully. Equity in all spheres, access, participation and rights, Elevating wages for workers who have been earning lower wage. The goal is to create opportunities for all to thrive since prosperity and justice go hand in hand rather than in opposition to one another. Universal basic income, income equality by gender and

race, equal opportunity for employment and credit, and allowing all to reach their full potential are all tenets social and economic justice.

A Debt Management Policy also needs to be established and followed, thus reclaiming the space and giving citizens a say around the debt that the government incurs on citizens' behalf.

The economy will be more successful if it is fairer, hence more advocacy is required to entrench the principles of justice and equality. There is a need for change and everyone has a voice and a role to play. Everyone is an advocate and a Human rights defender. It is time for all patriotic Zimbabweans to link up and influence policies in pursuit of social and economic justice.

Evernice Tayisepi is a Development Practitioner, Feminist and Social and Economic Justice Activist. She holds a First-Class Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree in Development Studies, from Midlands State University. Her research interests revolve around Social and Economic Justice issues, Gender, Feminism and Human Rights.



Manica Youth Assembly Goes Rural for Women and Girls in Zimbabwe

Cde Jussah

Manica Youth Assembly (MAYA) hosted a community dialogue on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in partnership with Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA), Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO), and the Ministry of Women Affairs in Ward 14, Mutasa Central. The community dialogue was mainly anchored on raising awareness of sexual gender-based violence amongst the youth in Mutasa constituency. This initiative came as a mechanism to reduce inequalities caused by the Covid-19 induced locked down due to the fact that women and girls can no longer access institutions that provides counselling and help. Women are mainly under attack in their homes and society in general. They face sexual violence, physical violence, emotional and psychological violence and also socio-economic violence. Cultural and traditional practices have perpetuated the subservient position of women, which makes them more vulnerable. Patriarchal socialization portrays women as perpetual minors who can be punished by their fathers, brothers and husbands.



Gender-based violence arises from social, cultural and religious practices that subordinate women. It thrives in communities where Gender based violence is acceptable as a form of conflict resolution. It is facilitated by patriarchal (male controlled) social hierarchies, acceptance of violence as a mode of social interaction and political interface; by socioeconomic inequality and a breakdown in norms and social structures. Gender based violence reflects and re-enforces differences between men and women and compromises the health, dignity, security and autonomy of victims. It serves to perpetuate male power and control and is sustained by a culture of silence and denial of the serious of health and social consequences of abuse. In Zimbabwe gender-based violence is seen particularly in acts of domestic violence where rights are violated because of physiological make-up and gender roles performed. Spousal

abuse is the most common form of gender-based violence. As a result of the patriarchal nature of Zimbabwean society, women are affected more by gender-based violence than men. Women are mainly under attack in their homes and society in general. They face sexual violence, physical violence, emotional and psychological violence and also socio-economic violence. Cultural and traditional practices have perpetuated the subservient position of women, which makes them more vulnerable. Patriarchal socialization portrays women as perpetual minors who can be punished by their fathers, brothers and husbands.

Traditional practices which violate women include:

- Forced virginity testing
- Pledging of women or girls for the purposes of appeasing spirits
- Child marriages.



1. Youth group organizes event with other organizations to discuss gender-based violence of women and girls, requesting that young men help.

The plenary comprised of health workers, gate keepers, young people, and the Headman Mr Chikumbu is in charge of a certain village area. Young people must be the driving force in environmental and climate justice issues and at the same time must not be the driving force for propelling gender-based violence in the communities.

Causes of gender-based violence also include:

- Economic dependency of women on men
- A weak and unproductive policy framework
- Cultural, religious or ideological permissiveness
- Bias that condones gender-based violence
- Poor reporting and redress mechanisms for victims
- Social degeneration associated with the breakdown in social values
- Rape of virgins by HIV positive men in the belief that they can be cured of the diseases
- Subjugation of women.



1. Tendai Nyamadzi Programmes Officer MAYA shading more light on the ways to reduce gender based violence in communities

MAYA's Gender, Research, and Development Officer, Rutendo Nyanhanda, stated that, "During this period of Covid19 pandemic and indefinite lockdown, violence towards girls and young women is accepted as a social norm. This must be challenged as a matter of urgency and the blame, shame, and stigma faced by victims must be eliminated."

Moreover, there is need to embrace SDG5 (Sustainable Development Goal 5 is Empower Women and Girls and Ensure Their Equal Rights) so that every young man plays a pivotal role in climate action and makes more noise on the Environment.

With many thanks to our Partners





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[ZIMCODD]**

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**“What sort of country and society do we want to
be after the Covid-19 pandemic?”**



Breakfree!