

Investing in People for Social and Economic Justice

People's Economic Aspirations Post COVID-19: Towards an Inclusive, People-Centred Economic Recovery Plan



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Introduction

This policy brief is aimed at projecting Zimbabwe citizen's economic aspirations towards an inclusive, people-centred post COVID-19 economic recovery plan. The policy brief presents the desires and aspirations of the vulnerable and marginalised people of Zimbabwe towards a people-centred and robust economic recovery plan. The brief summarises people's aspirations that include robust consultative processes in the policy making process, devolution, rationalisation of taxation system, debt management, respect of the rule of law and the need for five-year development strategies as people's aspirations. The policy brief also highlights factors that are militating against an inclusive and people-centred economic recovery plan which include centralisation, partisan politics, top-down approach and weak awareness campaigns.

To further strengthen the economic aspirations of the people towards the attainment of a people-centred economic recovery plan and circumventing the above limitations, this policy brief recommends vigorous inclusive consultative processes, effective debt management, stability and policy consistency as well as intensifying awareness campaigns.

Context Analysis

The novel COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an unprecedented global economic recession. The pandemic is ravaging the world "beyond anything experienced in nearly a century" overtaking the impact and effects of the 1930s Great Depression. Humanity and development are under threat after being caught unaware by the deadly virus. Studies carried out by the United States of America (USA) Congressional Research Services indicate that, global economic growth is likely to decrease by 3.0% to 6.0%. Researches by the World Bank corroborates with the Congressional Research Services assertion by noting that approximately US\$ 10 trillion dollars is likely going to be lost. The world has also been robbed of the much needed human capital with 928,340 deaths and 29,189,903 cases as at 21 September 2020. Economic activities were for a moment interrupted with most nations closing down their borders and airspace as preventive measures.

Nonetheless, across the global spectrum, both developed and developing nations are beginning to craft policies and strategies for post COVID-19 recovery. While countries such as the United States of America, United Kingdom, South Korea and Australia have utilised structures of democratic representation for public consultation and understanding people's aspirations in the post COVID-19 recovery plan, less can be said to some African countries such as Uganda, Zambia, Central African Republic and Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe, strategies and post COVID-19 recovery plans are already underway with domestic and international flights resuming on the 10th of September and 1st of October respectively with public school examination set to be written during this year. The reopening of schools and resuming of domestic and international flights are positive steps towards the reopening of the economy and a post COVID-19 recovery plan. The logic of the narrative lies in the fact that, once borders and airspaces are open, economic activities begin. While reopening the economy is a welcome move, it is imperative to note that a successful recovery plan must be inclusive projecting the

Delivoriotis, A. & Scholz, N. 2020. Economic impact of epidemics and pandemics, European Union Parliamentary Research Services.

Congressional Research Services. 2020. Global Economic Effects of COVID-19. Washington DC, Congress Research Services.

Mutizwa, B. 2020. COVID-19 a Global Nightmare: Revamping the Zimbabwean Health Sector (ZHS) For Future Epidemic and Pandemic Management. Journal of African Problems and Solutions, 2(1):59-73.

Famine Early Warning Systems Network. 2020. COVID-19 lockdown restricting access to income for many, with urban poor likely to be worst affected. Retrieved from

<https://reliefweb.int/report/rwanda/rwanda-key-message-update-covid-19-lockdownrestricting-access-income-many-urban-poor>

Congressional Research Services. 2020. Global Economic Effects of COVID-19. Washington DC, Congress Research Services.

www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/06/18/covid-19-could-lead-to-permanent-loss-in-learning-and-trillions-of-dollars-in-lost-earnings

www.worldmetres.info/coronavirus/

aspirations and wishes of the Zimbabwean people as they were at the core of the devastating effects of the pandemic. A robust recovery policy will not appear as a surprise to the masses but rather address the challenges they must have communicated to the government during the engagement and consultation process.

The effects of the pandemic were not exclusive to any tribe, political affiliation, city or gender. Their far reaching inimical effects were felt across every corner of Zimbabwe. To this end, this policy brief sought to explore people's economic aspirations under the lenses of an inclusive, people-centred economic recovery plan. It intends to promote a post COVID-19 economic recovery hybrid approach which synthesis bottom-up and top-down approaches. European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control suggested that, crating policies that are citizen driven is the key in mitigating the pandemic. This is because a top-down approach usually project elitism by neglecting the issues and woes encountered by the mass. Therefore, a hybrid approach which amalgamate bottom-up and top-down approach will likely reflect the people's post COVID-19 economic aspirations culminating in greater public participation and socio-economic justice.

Factors which Promotes an Inclusive People-Centred Economic Recovery Plan

This section covers factors that the people of Zimbabwe regarded as imperative in creating a viable people-centred economic recovery strategy that addresses the woes and challenges encountered by the masses during the pandemic.

1. Robust Inclusive Consultative Processes

Robust inclusive consultative processes across the country were regarded as integral components of a feasible and sustainable post COVID-19 economic recovery plan. Data gathered show that, for far too long the Government of Zimbabwe has been engaging in non-exhaustive consultative processes meant to water-down the voice and aspirations of the people. Established democratic consultative structures are neglected every now and then culminating in the creation of top-down policy that project elitism and insensitive to the social and economic needs of the masses. The pseudo consultative processes are meant to create a smoke screen of a viable governance structure that promotes social economic justice while in reality projects a democratic misnomer. This can be evidenced by the recent constitutional amendment consultations which were done in a systematic and deliberate exclusive manner. To this end, the people's economic aspirations present a departure from the pseudo consultative processes. The masses clearly expressed that, a viable post COVID-19 economic recovery plan should echo the voices of the vulnerable and marginalised citizens that the policy seeks to address, particularly those in the rural areas. Rigorous policy research, citizens' engagement and participation emerging from the Village Development Committee (VIDCO) and Ward Development Committee (WADCO) were suggested by the masses as pillars to a feasible, sustainable and remedial economic recovery plan that generates greater public participation and effectively address the social economic woes induced by the pandemic.

2. Devolution

The masses identified devolution as one of the key strategies for a progressive post COVID-19 recovery, reconstruction and rehabilitation plan. Devolution denotes the legal delegation of power from the central government of a sovereign state to administer at a

Zimbabwe Economic Policy Analysis Research Unit. ND. Exploring Key Successful Factors in Implementing Devolution in Zimbabwe
www.dailynews.co.zw/devolution-requires-electoral-reforms/

Chibisa, P & Sigauke, C. 2008. Impact of Operation Murambatsvina (Restore Order) on Flea Markets in Mutare: Implications for Achieving MDG 1 and Sustainable Urban Livelihoods. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 10 (1): 31-65

ILO. (2020). Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture. Employment Sector, International Labour Office, Geneva.

Vingirayi, I., Hapanyengwi, O., Nyagadza, B. and Nyamuradza, N. (2020). Zimbabwean Informal Sector ZIMRA Tax Revenue Collection Barriers. *Journal of Global Economics, Management and*

subnational level, such as a regional or local level. It is an administrative decentralisation. Decentralisation is an effective public management stratagem that has been regarded as progressive and an enzyme for development and growth as evidenced by the United States of America model of governance. Including devolution in the reconstruction policy will promote a swift recovery and rehabilitation process that cater for vulnerable and marginalised citizens. Currently, some of the socio-economic injustices and service delivery quagmires encountered by the masses are associated with the principle of centralisation. Data attained through key informant interviews during the study indicated that, devolution will induce transparency, development, great horizontal accountability, eliminate centralised system of governance, infuse locally-driven development, deep democracy and increase public participation.

Responses of residents from Chiredzi District which houses the twin giant sugarcane plants of Tongaat Hulle's Zimbabwe namely Triangle and Hippo Valley indicates that, their districts have remained backward because much of the profits they are making are not used to develop the districts but rather centralised by the state culminating in the shrinking of fiscal space for their local authorities coupled with poor service delivery. This is despite the availability of legal provisions that advocates for devolution. According to the Constitution of Zimbabwe section 301 (3) not less than 5% of the national revenues raised in any financial year must be allocated to the provinces and local authorities as their share in that year. To this end, the 2019 budget set aside US\$ 310 million for devolution to be shared among 10 provincial councils and 92 local authorities. In 2020 and 2021 the budget was expected to increase by 12% and 15% that is US\$ 347.2 million and US\$ 400 million respectively. Nonetheless, with the adoption of a mono-currency the budget was reviewed to ZWL\$ 703 million. There is also a plethora of legal and institutional framework to complement the devolution process. The former includes the Constitution of Zimbabwe, Provincial Councils and Administration Act (Chapter 29:11), Rural Councils Act (Chapter 29:13), Regional and Town and Country Planning Act (Chapter 29:12) and Urban Councils Act (Chapter 29:15). The latter encompasses the Central Government, Provincial and Metropolitan Councils and Local Authorities. Therefore, taking into consideration the availability of funds, legal and institutional frameworks, government's inability to complete the devolution process can partially be attributed to a lack of political will and electoral reforms. Inevitably, the implementation of devolution in the post COVID-19 economic reconstruction will lead to the improvement of the fiscal space and service delivery culminating in development and growth as well as revitalisation of dilapidating infrastructure.

3. Rationalisation of Taxation System

The majority of the Zimbabwean population thrive on informal activities. A study by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 2020 reinforces the above assertion by noting that approximately 80% of the Zimbabwean population is in the informal sector. What this entails is that, much of government revenue is generated from the informal sector. At the same time, informal traders are struggling to survive. The research noted that informal

Business Research, 12(2): 14-25.

According to respondents from Ngundu, Mupandawane, Chipadza, Mbare and Checheche who are in the informal sector.

Chivivi, O., Paines, M. and Nyasha, M. 2014 'Advertising Strategies and Tactics Applied by the Flea Market Traders to Alleviate Poverty in Zimbabwe. Case of Mupedzanhamo (Harare) and Global Flea Market (Gweru)', *European Journal of Business and Management*, 6(27): 22-29

Dalu, T., Maposa, V., Dalu, T. and Pabwaungana, S. 2013 'Awareness and compliance levels of informal traders with regards to their presumptive tax obligations: a case of Harare central business district informal traders', *African Journal of Economic and Sustainable Development*, 2(4): 297-308

Zimbabwe Economic Policy Analysis Research Unit. ND, Exploring Key Successful Factors in Implementing Devolution in Zimbabwe
www.dailynews.co.zw/devolution-requires-electoral-reforms/

Chilisa, P. & Sigauke, C. 2009. Impact of Operation Murambatsvina (Restore Order) on Flea Markets in Mutare: Implications for Achieving MDG 1 and Sustainable Urban Livelihoods, *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 10 (1): 31-45

ILO. (2020). Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture, Employment Sector, International Labour Office, Geneva.

Vingirayi, I., Hapanyengwi, O., Nyagadza, B. and Nyamuradzwa, N. (2020). Zimbabwean Informal Sector ZIMRA Tax Revenue Collection Barriers, *Journal of Global Economics, Management and Business Research*, 12(2): 14-25.

According to respondents from Ngundu, Mupandawane, Chipadza, Mbare and Checheche who are in the informal sector.

Chivivi, O., Paines, M. and Nyasha, M. 2014 'Advertising Strategies and Tactics Applied by the Flea Market Traders to Alleviate Poverty in Zimbabwe. Case of Mupedzanhamo (Harare) and Global

traders are heavily taxed, they pay presumptive tax which includes tax on rental, income and cross-border presumptive tax, tollgate fees, market fees and hawker licence to local authorities and associated toilet fees. Using a representative taxpayer approach under the lenses of women in the informal sector, the research discovered that informal traders pay a higher amount of their income in taxes as compared to formal traders, and therefore taxes paid by informal traders are extremely regressive. Women who operate in the informal sector are more adversely affected by taxes because they earn a lot less than men and are thus affected by the egressive nature of informal taxes, because the informal economy has more women than men.

The 2% tax on electronic transactions also imposes grave consequences on the majority of the Zimbabwean population whose livelihoods depends on vending. Therefore, while tax systems purport to be inclusive, the Zimbabwean taxation system serves to project a social distance between women, the proletariat and the actual beneficiaries who are the elite. The International Centre for Tax and Development (ICTD) in 2020 noted that, a progressive taxation system will remove excessive tax burden on the poor and promote social and economic justice. ICTD further elaborated that, "to help respond to COVID-19, African governments should prioritise taxing the rich" as this will be pivotal in solving socio-economic inequalities. The respondents also proposed that the 2% tax be ring-fenced towards social safety nets that are inclusive and community driven. If embraced to the fullest, this is likely to feed in the vision 2030 by propelling communities to the middle class income realm.

4. Vigorous Debt Management

Effective and vigorous debt management was also presented as a bedrock of an efficient post COVID-19 economic recovery plan by the respondents. Efficacy in debt management will culminate in the transmutation of government operations leading to optimum efficiency across the public sector. Although, there was a general consensus among respondents as to the role of debt management in the economic recovery plan and vision 2030 other respondents argued that transparency and accountability should never be compromised. The government was also asked to reconsider its position on intending to remove parliament oversight on agreements with foreign entities through the proposed Constitutional Amendment No. 2 Bill. The role of Parliament is to play an oversight role over the Executive functions and removing agreements with foreign organisations or entities beyond the scrutiny of Parliament, defeats the principle of separation of powers, public accountability and good governance. This will ultimately weaken democracy as well as shrinking the fiscal space culminating in poor service delivery, corporate governance epidemics coupled with dilapidating equipment leading to uncontrollable infrastructural gap and brain drain. Therefore, with respect to the above, this policy brief argues that viable debt management is the nerve-centre of a robust post COVID-19 economic plan and an enzyme of development and growth that eliminates class differences as well as social economic injustices.

Flea Market (Gweru). *European Journal of Business and Management*, 6(27): 22-29

Dalu, T., Mapasa, V., Dalu, T. and Pabwungana, S. 2013 'Awareness and compliance levels of informal traders with regards to their presumptive tax obligations: a case of Harare central business district informal traders'. *African Journal of Economic and Sustainable Development*, 2(4): 297-308

Munjezi, E., Mufasa, S., Maponga, S. and Muchuchuli, K. (2017) 'The Informal Sector Tax Revenue Potential: A Case of Zimbabwe'. *Research Journal of Finance and Accounting*, 8(8)

Mupfemaireyi, P., Choneta, I. and Moravanjika, D. (2014) 'Characterisation of Traders in the Clothing Flea Market Business: A Case Of Mbare-Mupezanzhomo and Avondale Flea Markets In Harare, Zimbabwe'. *Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 2(10)

International Centre for Tax and Development 2019. Working Paper 93 Expensive to be a Female Trader: The Reality of Taxation of Flea Market Traders in Zimbabwe

Dekker, M. 2009 *Livelihoods and Economic Crisis: The Case of Smallholder Farmers in Zimbabwe (1999-2008)* in Centre for the Study of African Economies, University of Oxford, Oxford.

www.ictd.ac/blog/respond-covid-19-african-governments-tax-rich/

www.ictd.ac/blog/respond-covid-19-african-governments-tax-rich/

Responses from Harare, Mutare, Masvingo, Gweru and Bulawayo

Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCDD). 2019. *An Analysis of the 2019 national budget. A social and economic justice perspective.*

Chilunjika, A. & Mutzwa, B. 2019. Exploring factors militating against the performance of parastatals in Zimbabwe: the case of the national railways of Zimbabwe from 2008 to 2016. *Journal of Public Administration and Development Alternatives (JPADA)*, 4 (2) 41-60.

5. Rule of Law Not Rule By Law

Rule of law and not rule by law is among the economic aspiration of the people in the post COVID-19. The citizens are concerned over the government's rule by law through the invocation of the Presidential Powers Temporary Measures Act (Chapter 10:20) which every now and then is used to implement statutory instruments. Excessive use of statutory instruments tends to abort public accountability through parliamentary oversight. It is a way of usurping the legislative role of parliament, a governance miscarriage and disaster that threatens democracy. In Zimbabwe, the use of statutory instruments has added to the already confusing and complex policy inconsistency which is unhealthy for an economic growth prospects. To this end, the people want the post COVID-19 economic recovery plan to be guided by rule of law and not rule by law to ensure greater citizens involvement, government reliability and citizen confidence.

6. Transitional Stabilisation Programme and A Five-Year Development Strategy

The research was cognisant of the approaching expiring date of the Transitional Stabilisation Programme (TSP) (2018-2020) and the need for a new Five Year Development Strategy (2021-2025). The research noted that, the successful formulation and implementation of the policy will be inevitable if wide inclusive consultations are done. Every citizen has a voice and it must be projected in policy development, with their wishes and aspirations laying the foundations of policy goals and objectives. Inclusive consultation will give voice to the marginalised groups and strengthen democracy. This will lead to a people-centred economic recovery plan that addresses social and economic injustices.

Factors Militating Against an Inclusive People-Centred Economic Recovery Plan

This section presents a glimpse of factors that the masses considered to be an impediment to an inclusive people-centred economic recovery plan.

Centralisation

Centralisation was regarded as the major drawback in the growth and development of Zimbabwe. Centralised systems of governance usually threaten the principles of good governance and social contract. It creates bottlenecks that breeds social and economic inequalities. Good governance thrives when citizens are engaged and participate in national issues. Good governance creates ground for social contract which strengthens greater public participation. It creates an open-government which is transparent, efficient and reliable. Centralisation also impedes on devolution which is effective in national development and organisational optimum efficiency.

Partisan Decision Making

The research noted that partisan decision making militates against an inclusive, people-centred economic recovery plan. It creates an atmosphere of "them" and "us" which leads to the exclusions of those who are suspected to be belonging to other political

Mandaza, I., 1986. The State and Politics in the Post-White Settler Colonial Situation", in Mandaza, I. (Ed), *Zimbabwe: The Political Economy of Transition 1980 – 1986*, Dakar: CODESRIA.

Dye, T., 2002. *Understanding Public Policy*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Mutizwa, B., 2020. Re-orienting Zimbabwe's regional relations as a tool for national development and growth (2000-2017) *Journal of Economics & Political Sciences (JEPS)* 1(1) 1-14

Respondents from Harare noted that, majority of the businesses that are taxed by the state are largely informal businesses as they constitute the larger portion of the economy yet the announced 18 Billion stimulus package was silent on informal sector and loud on formal businesses as if there are the only ones contributing to national development.

parties. Allegations of partisan decisions are not a new phenomenon in Zimbabwe, there are projected in every sector. Robust service delivery has been constantly undermined by partisan decisions and this can be evidenced by how parastatals and other government entities are managed.

Top-down Approach

Closely related to the concept of top-down approach is the principle of centralisation. The two have a lot in common. Centralisation denotes government's unwillingness to delegate power and responsibility to other tiers of the government for effective governance. This usually transpires in a unitary State. Nonetheless, Zimbabwe is a unitary State but in the process of implementing decentralisation. Top-down approach entails a policy formulation and implementation strategy which the government does not consult the citizens. Thus, citizen's needs and expectations are not included most of the times.

Weak Awareness Campaign

The research noted that, weak awareness campaigns are one of the major obstacles to the creation of policies that are inclusive and people-centred. Weak awareness campaigns limit the masses knowledge of the ongoing consultation processes. It is also associated with disinformation, propaganda and half-truth emerging from poor radio coverage or other ulterior motives. Some of policy issues are too technical as such requires someone to teach the masses face to face or over stable radio frequency.

Recommendations

To ensure an inclusive people-centred economic recovery plan, the government should consider the following recommendations:

1. Vigorous Inclusive Consultative Processes, through the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs and Parliament the government should utilise Village Development Committee (VIDCO) and Ward Development Committee (WARDCO) in policy consultation so as to ensure that the voice of every citizen echoes in government policy objectives and goals. Such consultative processes will ensure a synchronisation of bottom-up and top-down approach. Partisan politics should not define the government decision and decision making. Our government can adopt strategies on how South Korea has made use of plebiscites referendum, radio, television and coverage to enforce wide consultations.

2. Devolution, the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing should speed up the devolution process. Devolution promotes government optimum efficiency and it is a governance strategy to increase fiscal space, service delivery, national growth and development. The United Kingdom

Respondents noted that "them" the ruling party do not usually involve "us" the citizens.

Chilunjika, A. & Mutizwa, B. 2019. Exploring factors militating against the performance of parastatals in Zimbabwe: the case of the national railways of Zimbabwe from 2008 to 2016. *Journal of Public Administration and Development Alternatives (JPADA)*, 4 (2) 41-60.

Rupiya M. R. A. 2017. *Cradial Militarization and Politicization of Electoral Institutions*, retrieved from <http://www.crisisinzimbabwe.org/attachments/article/307/The%20Military%20Factor%20in%20Zimbabwe%20-%202017%20.pdf>

Ndebele, H. 2016. Zimbabwe: NRZ Moving the Nation to Doom. *All Africa Global Media*: Cape Town

Zhou, G. 2012. Three Decades of Public Expenditure Management in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 2(3): 33.

Adesina, J. 2007. "Social Policy and the Quest for Inclusive Growth: Research Findings from Sub-Saharan Africa", *Social Policy and Development Programme Paper: 33*. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

Adesina, J. 2007. "Social Policy and the Quest for Inclusive Growth: Research Findings from Sub-Saharan Africa", *Social Policy and Development Programme Paper: 33*. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

Areas such as Mahenye, Chisuma Sango Boarder Post have weak radio and television signals which limits their knowledge to ongoing issues.

is a perfect example of a nation that is progressing and strengthening democratic structures through devolution. Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales were given autonomy to govern and makes laws in their own jurisdictions and this has led to swift and progressive consultation process that is people driven culminating in robust service delivery and fiscal space.

3. Rationalisation of Taxation System, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development should see to it that, taxes are rationalised according to classes particularly the 2% intermediated transfer tax. The revenue generated from the 2% tax should be ring fenced for social services that advance the needs of Zimbabwean communities. If Zimbabwe is to attain vision 2030 and a middle-class economy, citizens need to be capacitated by reducing some of the taxes to enable them to reinvest in their businesses. The government should also consider broadening their tax base by taxing the rich more as suggested by the International Centre for Tax and Development (ICTD).

4. Effective debt management, The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the Zimbabwe Aid and Debt Management Office, the External Debt and Management Committee, Parliament and the Office of the President and Cabinet should see to it that government service its existing debt, both domestic and international. This will enable the government to have lines of credit that can be utilised to promote developmental projects. Japan has the highest debt in the world yet its developing. Thus there is a correlation between robust debt management and national growth.

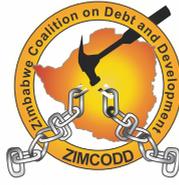
5. Stability and Policy Consistency, the government should see to it that stability and policy consistency is attained. The government's open for business mantra will only attract investors once there is stability and investor friendly laws. The government must desist from the practice of managing the country through statutory instruments, that is to say statutory instruments must not be used every now and then to circumvent existing laws. If vision 2030 is to be attained, the government need to pacify investors through policy consistency and stability.

6. Intensifying Awareness Campaigns, the Minister of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services, Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs and the Parliament should see to it that proposed policies and laws are understood by every Zimbabwean. There is need to focus more on community educational campaigns through radios, televisions, WARDCO and VIDCO.

Conclusion

People's economic aspirations are an integral component of a viable post COVID-19 that inclines towards an inclusive, people-centred economic recovery plan. To this end, the people's economic aspirations for a robust rehabilitation post COVID-19 are vigorous inclusive consultative processes, devolution, rationalisation of taxation system, rigorous debt management, rule of law not rule by law, transitional stabilisation programme and a five- year development strategy. This should be further reinforced by vigorous inclusive consultative processes, effective debt management, stability and policy consistency as well as intensifying awareness campaigns.

www.cbbc.com/2020/04/15/south-korea-moon-faces-a-referendum-of-public-confidence-at-the-polls
Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales were given autonomy to govern and makes laws in their jurisdiction.
<https://encyclopedia.federalism.org/index.php/devolution>
www.ictd.ac/blog/respond-covid-19-african-governments-tax-rich/
www.statista.com/statistics/270121/national-debt-of-japan/
The amount of Japan's debt in 2017 amounted to about 11.73 trillion US dollars



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ZIMCODD

9 Bargate Road Mount Pleasant, Harare

+263 24 2776830/1/5

@zimcodd1

Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development, Account:

ZimcoddZimcodd

zimcodd@zimcodd.co.zw

www.zimcodd.org

