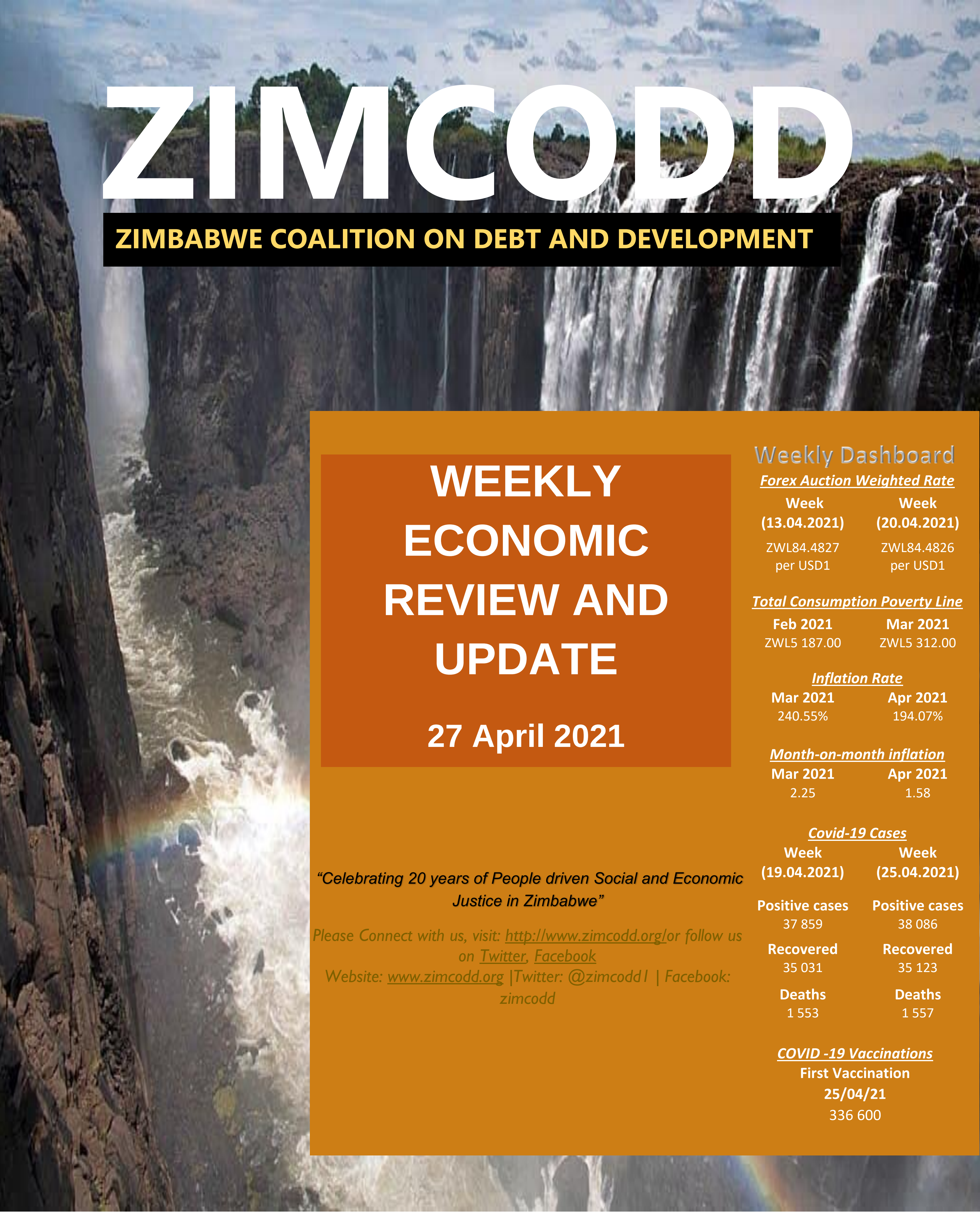

ZIMCODD

ZIMBABWE COALITION ON DEBT AND DEVELOPMENT

WEEKLY ECONOMIC REVIEW AND UPDATE

27 April 2021

Weekly Dashboard

Forex Auction Weighted Rate

Week (13.04.2021)	Week (20.04.2021)
ZWL84.4827 per USD1	ZWL84.4826 per USD1

Total Consumption Poverty Line

Feb 2021	Mar 2021
ZWL5 187.00	ZWL5 312.00

Inflation Rate

Mar 2021	Apr 2021
240.55%	194.07%

Month-on-month inflation

Mar 2021	Apr 2021
2.25	1.58

Covid-19 Cases

Week (19.04.2021)	Week (25.04.2021)
Positive cases 37 859	**Positive cases** 38 086
Recovered 35 031	**Recovered** 35 123
Deaths 1 553	**Deaths** 1 557

COVID -19 Vaccinations

First Vaccination
25/04/21
336 600

"Celebrating 20 years of People driven Social and Economic Justice in Zimbabwe"

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A Glimpse of Zimbabwe`s Political Economy

Zimbabwe has a complex political economy ecosystem that advance numerous interests which to a greater extent are tailor-made to promote self-interests. The Zimbabwean political economy ecology can be best understood under the prism of the game theory, as it involves different groups competing for finite resources and power that assess which policies will provide the most beneficial results. At the core of the Zimbabwean political economy is the concept of economies of affection which manifest through fiscal, monetary, structural as well as regulatory and oversight interventions.

Notable Issues This Week

CALL FOR A TRANSPARENT & PRUDENT USE OF COVID-19 RESOURCES

This past week Japan injected US$1.25million to support vulnerable people in Zimbabwe whilst World Vision Zimbabwe donated materials worth US$63,000 to Lupane schools and clinics meant to support the prevention and spread of Covid-19 within communities and schools. However, it is worrisome to note that government bodies and public officials who are entrusted with public resources are notorious of the flagrant abuse of public funds with no fear of retribution. As such, citizens bemoan the lack of political will by the government to curb corruption in all its forms and this has greatly undermined the independence and capacity of oversight and accountability institutions such as the Procurement Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (PRAZ) and the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC). There is therefore need to strengthen the capacity of watchdog institutions to detect and fight corruption and rent-seeking. The COVID-19 2020 Audit Report must be released and made public according to Section 309 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe read together with Chapter 22:18 of the Audit Office Act[1].

CALL FOR THE RELEASE OF THE 2019 AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

The Auditor General should have submitted the 2019 Audit Report to the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Professor Mthuli Ncube before 30 June 2020. It`s now 27 April 2021 and citizens are still unaware of how public funds were utilised during the 2019 financial year. The timing of the report is as important as the report itself. Further delay of the 2019 Audit Report undermines its essence because by 30 June 2021 the nation expects the Auditor General to submit the 2020 financial audit report to the Finance Minister. This clearly implies that the 2020 Audit Report will overtake and overshadow the 2019 Report findings. This has a negative bearing on the implementation of the Audit Findings by the responsible ministries, government departments and local authorities.

CONSUMER PROTECTION COMMISSION, A WELCOME DEVELOPMENT

ZIMCODD welcomes the appointment of a Consumer Protection Commission (CPC) mandated to implement the Consumer Protection Act. Prior to the establishment of the CPC, the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe (CCZ) has been the only body representing the interests of consumers in the country. Being a non-state actor, the CCZ proceeded by lobbying government to enact legislation meant to further the interests of consumers.[1] Although the lobbying route brought into effect several legislative changes, the establishment of the CPC is a move in the right direction as it comes with legislative powers outlined in the Consumer Protection Act. The gaps that CCZ could not address are now pursued by a State institution whose traction is supported legally enforced and manned by an accountable secretariat.

CALL FOR FEEDBACK ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NDS1 THUS FAR

On paper, the National Development Strategy (NDS)1 is well crafted and commendable on a number of aspects that previous economic blueprints have failed to take into account. The development strategy clearly articulates its implementation matrix, emphasising on strong need for monitoring and evaluation of progress made.

Advocacy Asks: **(1)** Can the government provide feedback to citizens on the progress it has made on employment creation, as the government indicated that it will create 460 000 jobs. 5 months into the NDS1, it is important that government informs citizens of the number of jobs created so far for the youth. **(2)**The government must inform the citizens of the number of NDS1 copies translated into the 16 official languages recognised in the constitution as well as the amount of money that government used to translate the NDS1. The translated copies should be made accessible to the citizens. **(3)** Citizens expect the government to provide them with a breakdown of the number of housing units that the government has started to construct in line with the Housing Delivery priority pillar of the NDS1 (the government is targeting accumulation of 220 000 housing units over the 5 year period).

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[1] The mandate of the Auditor General is to audit the accounts, financial systems and financial management of all departments, institutions and agencies of Government.

1 CCZ lobbied for the enactment of the Consumer Contract Act, the Competition Act, the Class Action Act, the Small Claims Court Act, the Patients Charter and the National Incomes and the Pricing Commission Act amongst many acts.

1. COVID-19 Resource Tracker

The COVID-19 Resource tracker is a ZIMCODD initiative to keep track of all resources pledged, received and utilised by the Government of Zimbabwe in response to the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 to date. The aim of the COVID-19 Resources Tracker is to strengthen transparency and accountability by the government on COVID-19 resources while empowering citizens with information to hold the government to account for the allocation and utilisation of COVID-19 resources. The tracker is updated on a weekly basis to show pledges honoured, resources received and resources expended. The Government, through the Ministry of Health and Child Care, has started rolling out COVID-19 vaccination programme which comes as an additional layer of protection against COVID-19 infection. The vaccination programme was launched on 18 February 2021. Vaccination in all provinces and districts began on 22 February 2021 and is expected to continue until all eligible people have been vaccinated.

Overall
Total Pledges=US$839,788,257;Honoured Pledges=$634,291,071; Amount Spent= $387,944,082

For the week ending 22 April 2021:
Total Pledges = US$1,313,000; Honoured Pledges =US$63,000; Amount Spent = US$63,000

In his Independence speech, the President of Zimbabwe, E.D Mnangagwa, , commended other nations, development partners, local private sector, institutions, churches and individuals for the financial and material support which has strengthened the nation's capacity to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. This past week Japan injected US$1.25million to support vulnerable people in Zimbabwe whilst World Vision Zimbabwe donated materials worth US$ 63,000 to Lupane schools and clinics meant to support the prevention and spread of Covid-19 within communities and schools. However, it is worrisome to note that government bodies and public officials who are entrusted with public resources are notorious of the flagrant abuse of public funds with no fear of retribution. As such, citizens bemoan the lack of political will by the government to curb corruption in all its forms and this has greatly undermined the independence and capacity of oversight and accountability institutions such as the Procurement Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (PRAZ) and the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC). Africa is facing its first recession in 25 years due to the pandemic. The informal sector which makes up 70% of the economy has been hardest hit and Zimbabwe is no exception. The recession is driven by the pandemic-imposed restrictions of global trade as well as declining continental and domestic economic activities due to lockdown.

Recommendations

- There is need to strengthen the capacity of watchdog institutions to detect and fight corruption and rent-seeking. This will ultimately boost citizens confidence and trust in the government.
- The COVID-19 2020 Audit Report must be released and made public according to Section 309 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe read together with Chapter 22:18 of the Audit

Office Act[1]. This is expected to shed light on COVID-19 social protection funds, economic stimulus funds, debt borrowings and other COVID-19 earmarked resource expenditures. Public scrutiny of the Report will enhance transparency and accountability in COVID-19 resources in particular and public finance management in general.

- The gradual easing of lockdown restrictions underscores the need to take into account best practices as well as immediate and long-term effects of COVID-19 on the social, financial and economy recovery. This information is critical in informing continued decision-making about the pandemic and the recovery of the economy. There is therefore need for a post-COVID economic recovery plan.

2. Delayed release of the 2019 Audit Report: Implications on public sector governance

Public sector auditing remains a foundation for the realisation of sound public sector governance. Through conducting factual and unbiased assessment of the public sector financial statements, public auditors especially Supreme Audit Institutions (Office of the Auditor General) assist public entities and other constitutional entities to promote good governance, public accountability, transparency, integrity, efficiency and effectiveness in all matters and decisions involving public funds. Above all, public sector auditing plays a crucial role in ascertaining whether public funds are being utilised for the attainment of set goals and objectives.

Despite the role of public sector auditing in curbing public sector corruption through supporting the governance responsibilities of oversight institutions like the Parliament and other accountability institutions, it is worrying to note that to date, Zimbabweans have no sight of the 2019 Auditor General's Report. This however does not imply that the country does not have legal frameworks which contextualise the release of audit findings including when and how the report should be made public. Section 10 (1) (a) of the Audit Office Act stipulates that;

> *the Comptroller and Auditor-General, after examining the accounts transmitted to him or her in terms of section 35(6) and (7) of the Public Finance Management Act [Chapter 22:19], and the accounts of any public entity, designated corporate body or statutory fund, and after signing a certificate recording the result of his or her examination, shall—prepare and submit to the Minister, not later than the 30th of June in each year, a report on the outcome of his or her examination and audit of the accounts referred to him or her in terms of section6(1).*

Specific to the issue at hand, the Auditor General, Mrs Mildred Chiri, should have submitted the 2019 Audit Report to the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Professor Mthuli Ncube before 30 June 2020. It`s now 27 April 2021 and citizens are still unaware of how public funds were utilised during the 2019 financial year. According to the Auditor General's Office, the delayed release of the 2019 Audit Report is largely attributed to the COVID-19 induced lockdown which posed operational challenges in the collation and assessments of financial statements. According to Section 32 (3) (b) of the Public Finance Management Act, the Annual Auditor General's Report must present the state of affairs of every Ministry, public entity or

[1] The mandate of the Auditor General is to audit the accounts, financial systems and financial management of all departments, institutions and agencies of Government.

constitutional entity, as the case may be. We are already in April 2021, citizens are still unaware of the state of public finance management in public entities and constitutional entities.

Why worry over the delay

The Auditor General's Report remains an important public accountability tool that should be accorded the value it deserves. The timing of the report is as important as the report itself. Further delay of the 2019 Audit Report undermines its essence because by 30 June 2021 the nation expects the Auditor General to submit the 2020 financial audit report to the Finance Minister. This clearly implies that the 2020 Audit Report will overtake and overshadow the 2019 Report findings. This has a negative bearing on the implementation of the Audit Findings by the responsible ministries, government departments and local authorities.

Zimbabwe's public finance management is characterised by perennial challenges including misappropriation of public funds, financial irregularities, unreconciled and unaccounted expenditure and lack of value for money in general. There is high likelihood that the financial irregularities and malpractices which occurred in 2019 have been repeated in the 2020 financial year and probably also in the current 2021 financial year. One of the major aims of the public audit is to detect cases of public finance mismanagement and proffer recommendations of addressing those anomalies. The anomalies in the 2019 financial year are not yet publicised and this is breeding ground for repeated cases of public financial misconduct. We are therefore calling upon the Auditor General to immediately publish the 2019 Audit findings without further delay.

3 Does the slackening inflation imply a reprieve to distressed Zimbabweans?

Runaway inflation rates have been amongst the indicators of failed economic management in Zimbabwe. As such, the lowering of year-on-year inflation from the 240.55% recorded for March 2021 to 194.07% recorded in April 2021 is highly commendable. Month-on-month inflation also eased from 3.45% in February 2021 to 2.26% in March 2021 whilst April of 2021 recorded 1.58%, is an indication of a break in inflationary pressure. In normal economic transition spells decreasing inflationary pressure contributes to economic stability, and promotes savings and investment culminating growth. Though it is too early to discern the long-term impacts of lowered inflation, prevailing signs indicate that without real wage growth, radical wealth distribution and long-term public sector led economic recovery, the benefits of lowered inflation will not translate into tangible improvements in the quality of life for most Zimbabwean households.

The Government of Zimbabwe 'macro-economic stability' reforms towards the achievement of a middle-income status economy place a large premium on decreasing the inflation rate. However, lowered inflation is not a magic bullet as it only refers to the formal economy whose essence continues to be dominated by the informal sector. The generality of Zimbabweans transacts in the informal sector where prices construe to the parallel market exchange rate thus the actual inflation might exceed the 'formalized' inflation rate. It is high time government co-opt the informal sector in the compilation of its statistics or devise a measure of inflation associated with the informal sector, the same way it devised the blended inflation rate if the reality of the economy is to be incorporated in public policy.

In spite of the lower inflation rates, a steady increase in the prices of essential household goods and services has been observable throughout the COVID-19 pandemic with already poor households sinking deeper into debt and poverty. High cost of foods, rentals, education and debt servicing fees in addition to the upcoming presumption tax regime place huge survival burdens on poor households and weaken aggregate demand in the broader economy. Mechanisms to facilitate the shared economic benefits of lowered inflation to all Zimbabweans are in need. The long-term trend of suppression of Civil Servants salaries and wages by the country's largest formal employer needs to be reversed as a critical pacesetter towards wage growth across all economic sectors. Accelerated State led infrastructure growth, social security and social service delivery programmes to create jobs and facilitate shared economic growth across all regions are also critical to embed the progress towards reducing inflation.

4. Let us all rally behind the Consumer Protection Commission

ZIMCODD welcomes the appointment of a Consumer Protection Commission (CPC) mandated to implement the Consumer Protection Act. The CPC has the responsibility to: i) Protect consumers; ii) Regulate and oversee the certification of Consumer Support Groups; iii) Establish an alternative dispute resolution framework and; iv) Advance consumer rights awareness in association with like-minded stakeholders. Prior to the establishment of the CPC, the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe (CCZ) has been the only body representing the interests of consumers in the country. Being a non-state actor, the CCZ proceeded by lobbying government to enact legislation meant to further the interests of consumers.[2] Although the lobbying route brought into effect several legislative changes, the establishment of the CPC is a move in the right direction as it comes with legislative powers outlined in the Consumer Protection Act. The gaps that CCZ could not address are now pursued by a State institution whose traction is supported legally enforced and manned by an accountable secretariat.

Areas of interlace between the CPC and the Competition and Tariff Commission (CTC) bring about concerns over possible duplication of roles. The Competition and Tariffs Commission handles and investigates grievances from the public, businesses, government, and regulators to nip unfair business practices. The unfair business practices are the very same issues pursued by the CPC. Although CTC mostly addresses the business side of the complains, the fact that it handles public grievances suggests that it also focuses on consumers' concerns. A close scrutiny of the scope of the two commissions (CPC and the CTC) must be conducted with the intention of either streamlining the operations of each of the Commissions to address duplication or merging the two Commissions and come up with a commission with a wider scope and cut on fiscal drain of the extra commission.

5. Regulation of Bureaux de Change

In a bid to increase access to funds through formal channels, the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) announced that it is going to start selling foreign currency to registered Bureaux de Change. The motive being to enhance access to foreign currency by small scale farmers. According to a Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) resolution, Bureaux de Change must play an active role in complimenting government efforts to make foreign currency available to small scale enterprises.

[2] CCZ lobbied for the enactment of the Consumer Contract Act, the Competition Act, the Class Action Act, the Small Claims Court Act, the Patients Charter and the National Incomes and the Pricing Commission Act amongst many acts.

According to RBZ, Bureaux de Change will be supporting small scale transactions up to a maximum of USD500 per transaction. This is a welcome move as it is expected to improve foreign currency accessibility by individuals and small businesses. Well-regulated local Bureaux de Change system can play a meaningful role in addressing some of the challenges associated with the foreign currency auction system. In particular local Bureaux de Change could potentially increase access to foreign currency for medium to small enterprises transacting smaller volumes. According to RBZ, the participating Bureaux de Change will be monitored through the Bureau de Change Transaction Reporting System in order to enhance transparency and accountability. A major concern however, remains around whether the regulatory framework for Bureau de Change will suffice to curb the tendency towards arbitrage opportunities for quick gains that has led to the collapse of countless banking and financial institutions. Another concern is the possibility of low uptake of the facility by a vastly unbanked informal sector, wary of the banking and financing sector's historic record of relatively high service charges compared to the cash culture which is rife in the informal sector.

Towards effective regulation of Bureaux de Change

- The RBZ must be explicit in defining authorized activities of Bureau de Change to ensure that any activities out of bounds are deemed illegal and liable to penalties. This will guard against Bureau de Change becoming conduits to illicit financial flows. Their activities must be limited to spot Over the Counter (OTC) transactions to discourage money laundering tendencies.
- Periodic background checks on directors and shareholders of the said Bureau de Change must be done to ensure that the entities are run by individuals of probity who uphold standards of integrity in their operations. This will build confidence in the general populace who are usually skeptical about the operations of these entities.
- Bureau de Change must implement professional accounting systems as well as internal control procedures which can be consolidated into sufficient evidence of an individual's business transaction for legal scrutiny or prosecution.
- Bureau de Change must use an electronic system that link to a centralized database for verification of currency transactions. This will eliminate the tendency of buying more than the prescribed foreign currency amount at different entities. The system can provide an option to flag out exceptions through authorizations by senior executives.
- The inclusion of presently informal foreign currency traders as licensed mobile Bureaux de Change receiving commissions monitored by electronic means could help encourage the public to conduct foreign currency business through licensed institutions. However, authorities must ensure consistent availability of cash throughout the Bureaux de Change system as erratic supply will erode confidence in the system and redirect transacting members to the informal market.

6. Constitutional Amendments a threat to Constitutionalism

On 31 December 2019, the Government gazetted Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Bill (No.2). On the 20th of April 2021 the bill sailed through the National Assembly with 191 votes for and 22 against. The amendment bill sought to make a myriad of principles and rules by which the polity of Zimbabwe is governed. To this end, a total of 27 amendments were proposed which are related to the judiciary, legislative and executive arms of the government. Nonetheless, this weekly review will not discuss all the amendments but will zero in on a few which are the removal of presidential running mate, appointment of ministers outside parliament and judicial amendments.

i. Removal of Presidential Running Mates (Clauses 2,3,4,5,6,7 &8)

Zimbabwe mimicked the concept of presidential running mates from nations such as United States of America and Malawi. The idea behind is that the candidate who will be running for Presidency will have to announce during campaigns his or her Vice President. The principle of running mate seeks to strengthen democracy by ensuring that in the event of an untimely death of a presidential candidate during or after elections the running mate takes over with the voters' blessing. Nevertheless, the removal of the running mate clause is propelled by power struggles and self-interest as there are other people within the party who would not want the running mate to become the president. This is because their political ambition will be thwarted. However, it is imperative to note that, the removal of running mates has a bearing on democracy as it will take away the peoples` choice to decide the vice-president they want. Democracy entails people choosing their leadership from the president to the last person in governance structure who is the councillor.

ii. Appointment of Minister out of Parliament (Clause 10)

The president will now have the power to appoint 7 ministers out of parliament instead of 5. Initially the principle of appointing ministers out of parliament was meant to harness exceptional talents and skills from individuals who might not be active in politics and yet have the capacity to propel national development and growth. Increasing the number of ministerial appointments out of parliament without peoples` approval is tantamount to democracy-siege. This is because it will increase the number of ministers who will be in government without people`s will yet elections must and should be the only way into government. It makes one question the motive behind and the questions remain, are 5 appointments out of parliament not enough for people with exceptional skills? or this is a way of diluting people`s will and centralizing power by appointing loyalist?

iii. Appointment of judges without public interviews and removal of judge age limits (Clause 14)

The security of tenure of Judges is essential to the independence of the judiciary. In promoting the independence of Judges, the constitution has mechanisms that see to it that Judges are not removed from office unnecessarily coupled with a compulsory retirement age. However, the amendment bill will weaken the independence of the judiciary and leave room for judicial capture by the Executive. The appointment of Judges without public interviews, risks the appointment of Judges based on loyalty and political affiliation rather than a democratic evaluation of experience, character and skills through a democratic though imperfect system of public interviews. The removal of public interviews therefore undermines transparency and citizen's confidence in the judiciary system. The judiciary is further compromised by the removal of age limits. This allows the President to extend the tenure of the current bench despite widespread concerns over the partisan and business interests of some Judges.

7. Zimbabwe National Roads Administration (ZINARA) Scandal

ZINARA is a Zimbabwean parastatal which falls under the Ministry of Transport. Recently, ZINARA made headlines for wrong reasons, a common tragedy in public finance management where state resources are being abused daily with no one being held accountable. The First Report of the Public Accounts Committee on the analysis of the ZINARA`s audited accounts for the year 2017 and 2018 as well as the Forensic Audit Report projects scintillating revelations of corruption and abuse of public funds. The report indicated that on the 11th of December 2018 Christmas hampers worth US$ 55 700 were bought from OK Mart, each board member receiving hampers valued at US$ 9 600. On the 22nd of August 2014 due process was not followed when the institution purchased Ipads for 12 board members worth of US$ 23 513 without ministerial approval. On the 5th of September 2014 a board meeting was held in Victoria Falls without any reasonable explanation and each of the 12-board members was paid US$ 5 140. A total of US$ 44 167 was paid to Mr Davison Norupiri, Jeffrey Nkomo and Albert Mugabe after Infralink was formed and the three board members were seconded to the company. This was done without due care as there was no ministerial approval. The forensic report further exposed that ZINARA sold vehicle licenses through Univern system without going to tender.

Nevertheless, an examination of the forensic audit report which shows an orthographic projection of ZINARA internal control mechanisms shows that ZINARA had weak corporate governance control systems. The first being the absent of a Human Resource Policy which guides and regulate recruitment, job grading as well as training and development. This compromised to the parastatal's human capital base which is the nerve-centre of management and operations capacity[3]. The Voice Zimbabwe[4] substantiate this assertion by noting that;

> *"if you then look on the qualifications of the people that were managing ZINARA, none of them including the managing director had a proper qualification, not a degree or diploma. In fact, the Finance Director had only one qualification. The qualification was a Bible Certificate from Ezekiel Guti`s College"*

It is imperative to note that, the ZINARA scandal had grave ramifications on the organisation`s performance. ZINARA was established to enhance road network system across the country and it was established in terms of Roads Act of 2001. As an institution, it is responsible for the management, development and maintenance of road networks throughout Zimbabwe. In this regard, the African Road Maintenance Fund Association (ARMFA) Focal Group Report of 2011 noted that ZINARA's vision and mission, is to become a world-class roads authority[5]. However, there has been a discrepancy in ZINARA`s performance as it has failed to revamp roads across the country. To this end, the government through Statutory Instrument (SI) 47 of 2021 Civil Protection (Declaration of State of Disaster: Rural and Urban Areas of Zimbabwe) (Road Infrastructure Network) Notice, 2021 declared all roads a national disaster acknowledging that

[3] Management and operational capacity primarily focus on "internal-facing capacities" which encompass the ability of a corporate to recruit, develop and retain talent, manage its finances as well as maintenance of vital infrastructure and systems

[4] www.zimbabwevoice.com/2021/04/23/zinara-corruption-shocker-finance-director-had-only-a-certificate-in-bible-study/

[5] African Roads Maintenance Fund Association (ARMFA) Focal Group Report. 2011. Country Reports and Discussions. Available at: https://www.armfa.org. (Accessed on 20 April 2021).

they need to be revamped. Thus, there is a correlation between how public finances are managed and organisational performance.

8. Weekly Advocacy Message

The need for feedback on the implementation of the National Development Strategy 1.

On the 16th of November 2020, President Mnangagwa launched the NDS1. The President noted that:

> *Consistent with the collective aspirations and determination of the people of Zimbabwe to achieve an Empowered and Prosperous Upper Middle-Income Society by 2030, the Second Republic launched Vision 2030 to chart a new transformative and inclusive development agenda. It is in pursuit of this vision that broad based transformation, new wealth creation and expanding horizons of economic opportunities for all Zimbabweans, with no one left behind can be realised.*

On paper, the NDS1 is well crafted and commendable on a number of aspects that previous economic blueprints have failed to take into account, and it has all the potential to succeed if properly implemented. Firstly, the development strategy clearly articulates the implementation plan or matrix, emphasising on strong need for monitoring and evaluation of progress made.

Advocacy: Can the government provide feedback to citizens on the progress it has made in attaining set targets in the NDS1's monitoring and evaluation matrix in particular on employment creation, the government indicated that it will create 460 000 jobs. 5 months into the NDS1 it is important that government informs citizens of the number of jobs created so far for youth.

Secondly, the Minister of Finance, Professor Mthuli Ncube said that the NDS1 shall be made available in different Zimbabwean languages which is a positive move taking into considering that the previous blueprints were only available in English.

Advocacy Ask: The government must inform the citizens of the number of NDS1 copies translated into the 16 official languages recognised in the constitution as well as the amount of money that government used to translate the NDS1. The translated copies should be made accessible to the citizens.

Thirdly, the government is targeting accumulation of 220 000 housing units to be delivered as a function of effective demand over the 5-year period.

Advocacy Ask: Citizens expect the government to provide them with a breakdown of the number of housing units that the government has started to construct in line with the Housing Delivery priority pillar of the NDS1.

Next week, ZIMCODD will through the weekly advocacy message highlight more priority pillars of the NDS1 where citizens expect feedback from the government on the progress being made in the implementation of the plan.

9. From the Regional Desk: Recommendations from Zambia Markets Campaign multi-stakeholder engagement

The Zambia Social Forum in conjunction with the Southern Africa People's Solidarity Network (SAPSN) held a multi-stakeholder Consultative meeting on the 23rd of April 2021 to share perspectives on improving market access for Small Holder Farmers (SHF). This is part of the ongoing Southern Africa Market Campaign to strengthen the capacities and increase market access for SHF to equitably benefit from agricultural value chains. Agriculture is a dominant economic sector in most Southern African countries, contributing up to 35% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) block. The sector also accounts for 13% of the block's foreign earnings generated from commodity exports and nearly 70% of the region's population relies on agriculture for food, income and employment. Smallholders Farmers are the core drivers of agriculture in Southern Africa. In Zambia there are over 1.5 million SHF. Most of whom live in rural areas where poverty rates have consistently remained close to 80%. Key recommendations from the Zambia consultation on market access are applicable in many Southern African countries.

1. **Implement the Maputo Declaration** committing governments to spend at least 10% of national budgetary resources to agriculture and rural development.
2. **Develop Local Commodity Exchange Markets and facilitate SHF inclusion in digital and electronic platforms** to increase the participation of smallholder farmers in the market.
3. **Increase access and improve reliability of inputs (seeds and fertilizers)** accompanied with the establishment of village-based Agro-dealers Network.
4. **Promote the domestic production of fertilizer** through the development and implementation of the fertilizer law and policy to encourage private sector investment.
5. **Expand storage capacity** to help networks of SHF to aggregate products and achieve economies of scale.
6. **Enhance the linkage of smallholder farmers to medium and big enterprises** through legislated compulsory quotas for local procurements and bans on importation of agricultural products for speculative purposes.
7. **Enhance the effective and efficient implementation of agricultural policies** through establishing functional agricultural policy implementation coordination mechanisms in order to improve ownership and accountability.
8. **Increase access to basic social services and amenities in** rural areas and farming communities to strengthen the skills base across the entire agricultural value chain.
9. **Train women farmers in process, product, functional and channel upgrading** in order to improve their participation in agricultural value chains.
10. **Promote the demand for local agriculture products and gradually implement food norms and standards in agricultural commodities.**