



THE Weekend Reader

"Your Weekly Read on Debt, Development & Social & Economic Justice"

The #HowFar Question on Mega-deals

This week, the Executive Director of ZIMCODD Janet Zhou, managed to engage with the Permanent Secretary of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services Nick Mangwana on ZimPapers Television Network¹ (ZTN) to discuss the #HowFar Campaign with a specific focus on mega-deals.

In this discussion ZIMCODD clarified that it is running the Campaign on behalf of all citizens who seek to ask #Howfar on commitments that were made by the government on different issues. Janet stated that "our clarion call for transparency and accountability is rooted in our deep desire to see improved use of public resources for inclusive growth that does not leave anyone behind".

For ZIMCODD this Campaign is a platform for citizens to ask those difficult questions about public funds, it's a public dialogue on transparency and accountability. Since the introduction of the "new dispensation" several deals have been announced. The big question however, has been on the implications of these mega deals on ordinary citizens. She further noted that although government has responded partially to the What question by sharing pictures of deals being implemented so far, the questions remain on when these will be completed, who is involved in the deals and how has the legal processes been followed.

Furthermore, the discussion indicated that the Campaign is centred on building a culture of transparency and accountability and this is an ongoing process not a once-off. Janet reiterated the hope that it becomes the norm to ask the difficult questions such as how the government is ensuring that these deals do not continue to worsen existing inequalities.

1. Access the full discussion on: <https://web.facebook.com/ZTNnews/videos/1088997501839045>

Mega-deals coupled with insufficient details are prone to corruption and the outcry is that the government might end up mortgaging the country's resources which will result in accumulation of debt. About US\$5,8 billion dollars has been lost in "tenderpreneurships"² in energy and agriculture sectors whilst 28 mega-deals have been pronounced in different sectors.

One major concern on the mega deals is how the role of the parliament in approving the deals that the country enters has been thwarted because of the executive overstepping its authority in the deals. In a Newsday report of 22 April 2020,³ MPs were demanding transparency and tangible results on the mega deals that were clinched by President Emmerson Mnangagwa since he came into power an indication that there was lack of transparency on these mega-deals. The article reported that the legislators felt that the Parliament was being side-lined in terms of treaties signed by the Executive.

As much as the country needs foreign direct investment, the worry is about the nature of how the mega-deals are mostly opaque and how some of the investors are controversial investors. Zimbabwe's economy is already suffering from the implications of mismanagement and corruption. One such controversial⁴ deal cited is with Pouroulis family – reported to be close to President Mnangagwa through Karo Resources limited which entered a dodgy US\$ 4,2 billion platinum investment deal with the government in March 2018 and acquired 3 special grants to mine chrome and other minerals along the mineral rich Great Dyke effectively giving them control of large portions of some of the most lucrative land in Zimbabwe.

Although government through the permanent secretary shared that its success is anchored on Vision 2030, the citizens' continued request is how to meet today's demands through these mega-deals and that is one of the reasons behind the #HowFar question. Janet shared that the campaign uses multimedia channels with the intention of utilising all spaces available to get the much-needed answers with the hope that it will turn around the nation's economic trajectory.

The Permanent Secretary noted that the Freedom of information Act has been enacted to give the citizens the right to access information and get answers to questions such as what the campaign seeks. He further noted that the government has been transparent and as far as he is concerned there is no other government that provides updates to the citizens after every cabinet sitting. He further noted that the

HOW FAR?

Corruption in the mining sector

USD \$1.8 Billion
Revenues lost through
smuggling annually.

You deserve to know!

Zimbabwe Coalition On Debt and Development
ZIMCODD

Investing in People for Social and Economic Justice

zimcodd.org/howfar

#HowFar

2. A process whereby government officials or political elites abuse their powers and influence to secure government **tenders** and contracts

3. <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2020/04/mps-want-transparency-on-mega-deals/>

4. <https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2018/05/24/mega-mining-deals-must-scrutinised/>

government has also been recognised for budget transparency which is a good sign that it has been improving.

ZIMCODD would like to acknowledge the participation of the permanent secretary in the programme as well as his promise to uphold requests from citizens on information about what government is doing. We consider this gesture from government as progressive and important to what the #Howfar seeks to promote. We look forward to engaging more duty bearers in our continued quest to know #Howfar.

HOWFAR?

The infographic features a magnifying glass over a document with the word 'AUDIT' prominently displayed. The background contains various financial and administrative terms like 'PROCESSES', 'ACCOUNTING', 'RECORDS', 'FINANCE', 'SUPERVISION', 'RECEIPTS', 'TRUST', 'INDEPENDENT', 'ENGAGEMENT', 'OPERATIONAL', 'CORPORATE', 'FINANCIAL', 'CO-INVESTMENT', and 'CORPORATE'. The main text is presented in a clean, modern layout with white and yellow callout boxes on a dark background.

Auditor General's Report 2018

356 recommendations
Only 92 (26%)
fully implemented.

You deserve to know!