

THE WEEKEND READER

“Your Weekly Read on Debt, Development & Social & Economic Justice”

3/18/22

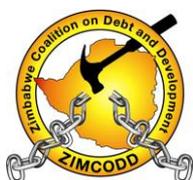


ZIMCODD Launches #HOWFAR 2.0 Campaign

On the 17th of March 2022, the Zimbabwe Coalition and Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) launched the #HOWFAR 2.0 Campaign which is aimed at re-igniting the pace for the previous campaign that was launched in September 2021. The agenda remains the same - **To demand for the government to be transparent and accountable in the management of public resources.** The launch drew from the first campaign's challenges, successes and lessons learnt noting that it had received resounding attention from the general public and activists who showed keen interest in holding various levels of the government of Zimbabwe to account. Amongst the successes of the #HowFar Campaign was its ability to unlock the government's appetite to respond to citizens' questions, which was a clear shift from the prevailing culture of withholding information. Through the #HowFar 2.0 Campaign ZIMCODD will engage on various social media platforms while billboards will remain in place to foster public dialogue and debate and to remind us of our lived realities that remain unaddressed. The second phase will bring something new and exciting to look forward to as it will see the introduction of the #RealTalk show and The In4, which will be ZIMCODD's uncensored public finance management news channel.

The ZIMCODD Executive Director's keynote speech at the HOWFAR 2.0 Launch detailed the journey of the first phase of the campaign and re-emphasized the purpose of the #HowFar Campaign and the citizens' expectations on the need for public accountability:

“Ladies and gentlemen, comrades and friends we are here again to talk about the major deficiencies, concerns and worries in our beloved country, Zimbabwe. The launch of the #HowFar 2.0, is not just for nostalgic purposes where we reminisce of the problems in Zimbabwe, talk about the initial #HowFar campaign and go home. It is about us reflecting and contributing to the building blocks of rebuilding this beautiful country as it is said; **“Nyika inovakwa nevene vayo.”** This must give everyone a sense of duty, belonging, ownership and responsibility to make Zimbabwe a great, prosperous and a resilient nation



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positioned to tackle the disruptions poised by modernity. We believe, the bedrock of building this nation is accountability. Our government must be accountable to the citizens on how public resources are managed. The citizens must be empowered to put the public officials under scrutiny and ask critical questions without fear or favour.

In efforts to tackle the accountability question and bring the citizens and government in the public space and open up and build a culture of accountability, on 3 September 2021, we launched of the #HowFar Campaign. A campaign designed to raise awareness and promote public dialogue on the lack of transparency and accountability by our various levels of government in public resource management. Citizens asked many questions through multichannel platforms directly to government and some responses were indeed received on some of them.

Building on the successes, challenges and opportunities of the first phase of the campaign, we are excited that today we are launching the #HowFar 2.0. This is an effort to keep the public debate and dialogue between the citizens and the government relevant to the context, refresh it and pivot towards pertinent issues emanating from the engagements that have gone on since the launch of the #HowFar campaign in September 2021.

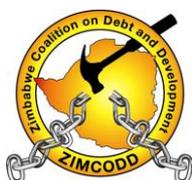
Despite the challenges encountered during the first phase, the campaign has been a worthwhile learning journey. It received an overwhelming response from the general public and activists who have shown keen interest to hold duty bearers to account.

The debate on #HowFar raged on social media which saw the hashtag becoming on the top 10 trending subjects on Twitter with each Tweet getting an average of 1500 impressions. To date, our estimated direct reach through social media, physical meetings, collaborations and through Information, Education and Communication (IEC) material combined is in excess of 500 000 people.

We are also definitely confident and proud to claim that the government's campaign **#So far, #ThisFar EDelivers** was born out of an attempt to respond to the #HowFar questions and updating citizens on what the government has done to improve service delivery since the second republic assumed power. While we found the responses to focus on the "what" question, we always sought for comprehensive answers, in particular on the use of the public funds- due diligence processes, procurement, timeliness of projects among other key questions to promote accountability in its proper sense.

We also witnessed the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and Publicity, Mr Nick Mangwana showing willingness to appear on ZIMCODD facilitated platforms specifically the ZIMPAPERS Television Network and Capitalk FM to respond to and give updates on some of the questions raised on the mega deals that the government signed under the Zimbabwe is Open for Business mantra among other public service delivery concerns. Nonetheless, we are not yet there and must continue to demand more. Answering publicly to the #HowFar question must become a culture.

While we recorded key successes, the path we have traversed so far was not a walk in the park. The campaign was also received with hostility and suspicion from some overzealous members of the society who thought and still think that the campaign is an attack. These sentiments were expressed through the defacing and destruction of the #HowFar billboards, particularly those that were focusing on corruption and misuse of public funds.



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A billboard which inquired on the progress made on the prosecution of the ZINARA, DRAX and NSSA scandals was defaced; a billboard in Masvingo was uprooted and the Hwange Colliery Company also deliberately removed a billboard that requested an update on the Zambezi Water Project. These acts were a direct attack on the quest for a culture of public accountability that the campaign seeks to entrench in Zimbabwe. This brought to light the extent of intolerance and resistance to citizen's quest for accountability in Zimbabwe.

Honestly, it was not easy, but we remained resolute not because of the absence of fear but conquered by the passion for a better Zimbabwe for us all. We were labelled regime change agents for simply demanding answerability on that which belongs to the people of Zimbabwe. We were accused of harbouring sinister motives for simply exercising our constitutional right. Some sections of the media labelled ZIMCODD a rogue CSO for simply asking questions which the government should simply embrace and answer in the spirit of nation building.

Despite these setbacks, here we are today, launching #HowFar 2.0, the second phase of the campaign, of course coming with a different package. It is no longer business as usual.

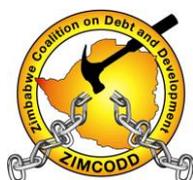
Ladies and gentlemen, as the President of Zimbabwe says, “Nyika inovakwa nevene vayo.” Tisu vene ve Zimbabwe. We are the citizens trying to build our country; building our country through ensuring that those in public offices are answerable to their decisions and actions. There is no country that can be built without public accountability. Zimbabwe cannot be built when corruption, theft and abuse of resources continue to be rampant both at national and local government levels. When we speak about corruption and unfulfilled promises, let everyone know that it is us the citizens who must build our nation.

Those who cannot tolerate or are unsettled by the accountability questions we will continue to ask, are indeed like those builders who throw away cornerstones. Rebuilding Zimbabwe is a collective initiative where various actors contribute from different corners and we are playing our part.

The launch of the #HowFar 2.0 is clearly a sign of our thirsty for accountability. It is a manifestation of patience and endurance in a context of polarisation, intolerance and uncalled for hostility.

Not taking away our acknowledgement and appreciation of the government response during the first phase, we feel that **there has been a selective approach to the responses; more needs to be done and more issues are yet to be responded to. We do not want piece meals we want the “whole meal”** when we are asking the critical accountability questions.

We will continue to ask pertinent and uncomfortable questions until a point where citizens witness prudence, transparency and accountability in the management of public resources at all levels. We are asking #HowFar with the promises made 4years back when the current crop of duty bearers assumed offices and power in 2018? The questions are directed to all levels of government from the central government to local authorities and from ward councillors to Members of Parliament. The HowFar 2.0 is taking this struggle to another level. We will engage through various platforms- Bill boards will remain in place to foster public dialogue and debate, to remind us of our realities that remain unaddressed. The #RealTalk will tackle issues one on one with those public officials who are going to choose to be accountable and be put on the hot sit to answer to the citizens questions. The In4- our news channel



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will wrap it up with giving the citizens unbiased, unfiltered public finance management news. These are just a few of the tools we have in the toolbox of the #HowFar 2.0.

We remain non-partisan and we are calling for all interested parties to utilise HowFar 2.0 platforms to engage with today's challenges until we get to a level:

- i. Where citizens do not have to beg for information which should otherwise be made publicly available;*
- ii. Where perpetrators of corruption, looting and abuse of public resources are brought to book;*
- iii. Where citizens become table bangers and demand a fair share of the national cake which is currently enjoyed by 1% whilst the 99% is living on breadcrumbs;*
- iv. Where no one will be called names for exercising his or her constitutional right of demanding transparency, accountability and prudence in the management of that which belongs to the people of Zimbabwe.*

Ladies and gentlemen, comrades and friends, let me also remind you that HowFar 2.0 is still and remains a platform where citizens from various walks of life make demands on diverse issues of national importance. Again, HowFar 2.0 will and shall remain non-partisan and a platform where citizens from across the digital divide can engage with duty bearers and those who aspire for public office.

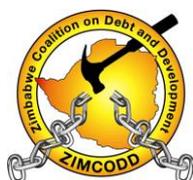
My call is for you to fully participate, engage and call our government to action and improve in the management of public resources, to improve our standards of living and off course to build Zimbabwe on the true tenets of transformation, participation, democracy and empowering the citizens by giving them a voice and making their voice matter. Let us build Zimbabwe, let us hold hands and give a hope and future to the next generation by managing resources as if we had borrowed from them and we will need to return them in the best condition and at a premium return.

I thank you”.

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Access the #HOWFAR #AFTER4 Campaign Launch here:

<https://www.facebook.com/IMHMediaCompanyzw/videos/485294696410931/>



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