

ZIMBABWE AT 43

18 APRIL 2023

Today, Zimbabwe celebrates 43 years of Independence and self-government. The birth of this nation is that of struggle whose result was supposed to be complete enjoyment of social, political and economic prosperity. However, the situation obtaining demands serious reflection as citizens are faced with daily struggles which demand action from those in public office. What worsens the matter is the hand of the political elite in creating this crisis and its continuance through poor governance and widespread corruption, contrary to the founding principles of our nation and the spirit of Ubuntu.

Corruption: Zimbabwe is endowed with minerals & arable land. However, citizens are unable to enjoy the benefits due to graft. Recent revelations are that we lose over \$1 billion in gold leakages annually due to political cartels. Further, distribution of land during the Land Reform program of the early 2000's only benefitted cronies of the political elite. As such, there is need for an overhaul of our accountability institutions including strengthening the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC), Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) and Parliament to ensure that we break cartels holding the resources of the nation for private gain.

Increasing Inequality: Noting the local challenge above (corruption), the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war are just two global examples of occurrences that have contributed to the increase in inequality across the country. Ordinary citizens are unable to access basic services such as health care & education. The elite fly out for medical services while the poor are unable to access the most basic medication such as paracetamol. The resources that we already have such as minerals should be efficiently used to improve the lives of citizens.

Regressive Taxation: Amongst others, the 2% Intermediated money transfer tax (IMMT) places demands on poor citizens while 'investors' and Multi-National Corporations receive tax breaks and concessions in the mining sector with no trickle down value to local communities. As an initial action, government should implement a Wealth Tax to ensure that the richest of our society pay a fair share in tax.

Poor Domestic Resource Mobilization: We continue to rely on aid and debt due to our inability to accrue value from domestic resources. The government of Zimbabwe must put in place an effective Domestic Resource Mobilization strategy for the country to escape from the Aid and Debt dependence syndrome. Further, a debt audit should be instituted to ascertain odious debt.

High Unemployment & the Drug pandemic: Bleak economic prospects for the youth have resulted in majority fleeing abroad while those who remain have now fallen to the drug curse. Addressing the socioeconomic issues above will go a long way in lifting youth out of this crisis and ensuring a sustainable future for our land and enjoyment of meaningful independence.