

Weekly Economic Review

27 June 2023



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1. Summary

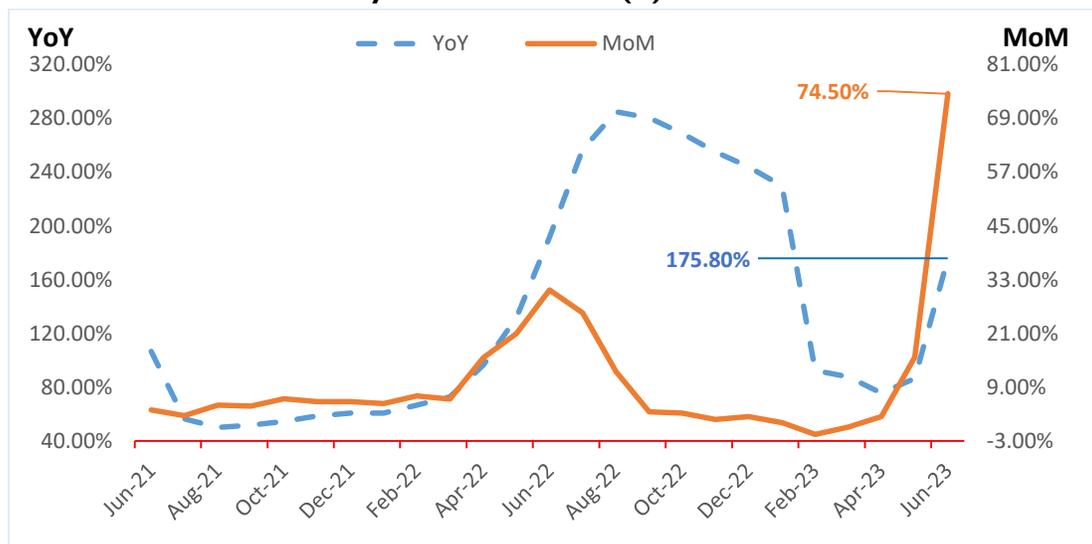
This week's issue of the Weekly Economic Review (WER) analyzed the latest June 2023 price inflation statistics, the government proposal to increase civil servants' salaries, and the recently secured US\$400 million external loan facility from Afreximbank. It also contains detailed articles covering inter alia the massive exodus of Zimbabweans to South Africa, the correction of amendments to the Constitution, and maternity woes faced by women in Zimbabwe.

2. Weekly Economic Review and Analysis

2.1 Inflation Wreaked Havoc in June 2023

The latest blended inflation statistics released by the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZimStat) show prices mounting by 175.8% between June 2022 and June 2023, about 89 percentage points up from the 86.5% increase realized between May 2022 and May 2023. Blended inflation was introduced in February 2023 and it measures combined price changes of goods and services in US dollars and Zimbabwe dollars (ZWL). In monthly terms (May 2023-June 2023), blended prices have increased by 74.5% compared to an increase of 15.7% registered in the previous month (April 2023-May 2023).

Zimbabwe Annual & Monthly Inflation Trends (%)



Source: ZimStat

Although the blended inflation rate spiked significantly in June 2023, these blended metrics are close to meaningless as they fail to give a true reflection of pricing dynamics, especially for ZWL earners. For instance, in June 2023, the local currency suffered serious speculative attacks (sudden & massive selling of a currency to destabilize its value) forcing ZWL prices to triple and quadruple in some cases. This, therefore, shows that the blended monthly inflation rate of 74.5% presented by authorities is surely misleading as it masks the actual inflation tax faced by those largely earning in ZWLs, particularly civil servants. Some independent inflation estimates are showing ZWL inflation above the 1200% mark in June.

Largely fuelling hyperinflation in June 2023 was the massive ZWL decline against the USD as the market responded to excess liquidity growth that was emanating from RBZ quasi-fiscal operations. Also, escalating ZWL liquidity in the market was the spiking fiscal spending as the nation gears for a harmonized election process slated for August 2023. As of 26 June 2023, the ZWL has erased 62% of its value against the greenback on the interbank market sliding from ZWL/USD 2577.06 end of May 2023 to ZWL/USD 6862.28. In the parallel markets, the local unit of exchange also declined excessively as it lost 54% of its average value from ZWL/USD 3600 realized at the end of May 2023.

Apart from the exchange rate pass-through to inflation, price instability in June was also partly driven by negative perceptions, adverse expectations of future inflation, structural rigidities like corruption & increased load-shedding, spillover effects from the Russia-Ukraine war, and increased money velocity exerting upward pressure on prices. The government has since instituted many policy measures to tame ongoing economic instability. In response to these measures, the rate of ZWL exchange rate depreciation seems to have started to subside thereby reducing parallel market premiums within conventional thresholds.

If the government doesn't waver and adhere to monetary and fiscal discipline coupled with full implementation of political and economic reforms to increase market efficiency & innovation, curb corruption & impunity, eliminate illicit financial flows, and restore the rule of law as well as respect for individual rights & freedoms, durable macroeconomic stability will be attained. But, be that as it may, it remains to be seen if there will be any meaningful reform(s) that will be fully implemented two (2) months from an election. In developing nations like Zimbabwe, the major aspect of elections is access to public resources through an electoral victory hence the reason they are often the object of fraught competition and conflict.

2.1 Government Considering USD Pay Increase for Civil Servants

It is reported in the mainstream media that the government is currently considering effecting a salary increase for civil servants on the existing salary structure – the US dollar (USD) and Zimbabwe dollar (ZWL) components. The last pay increase for the civil service was instituted in the first quarter of 2023 (1Q23) when the gross ZWL emoluments were hiked by 100%, Cushioning & COVID-19 Allowances were increased by 25% to US\$250 from US\$200, and an introduction of US\$80 Teaching Allowance for public teachers. Also, the Treasury increased the Cushioning & Covid Allowance for pensioners by 11.1% to US\$100 from US\$90 and promised a government-funded funeral insurance framework as well as a free primary school education up to a maximum of three (3) children at government schools for all civil servants.

The latest salary offer from the government was inevitable as the nation is battling galloping inflation which saw shelf prices of many basics in the formal shops moving beyond the reach of many. June 2023 witnessed an unsustainable decline of the Zimbabwe dollar (ZWL) against the USD in both official and parallel markets. In the official markets, the Treasury and Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) instituted a cocktail of fiscal and monetary policy measures that revolutionized the operational dynamics of the RBZ's foreign currency auction market and a seismic shift toward a fully liberalized willing-buyer willing-seller

(WBWS) interbank market.¹ The WBWS interbank market is the official market that determines the market reference exchange rate and businesses are allowed a 10% margin above the interbank rate when pricing goods and services in ZWLs.

Consequent to the foregoing policy shifts by the government, improved ZWL price discovery saw the local currency plunging massively in the interbank market in June 2023. RBZ interbank statistics show that as of June 26, the ZWL has erased 62.4% of its value against the greenback from ZWL/USD 2577.06 end of May 2023 to ZWL/USD 6862.28. In the alternative (parallel) markets, the local unit of exchange also declined excessively as it lost 54.4% of its average value from ZWL/USD 3600 realized at the end of May 2023. This elevated decline of the ZWL is disproportionately affecting ZWL earners thus widening societal inequality and plunging the majority into abject poverty. For instance, the June 2023 ZWL salary component received by least paid civil servants who constitute the majority of the service was below ZWL100 000 yet a 2-liter bottle of cooking oil is selling above ZWL30 000 in many retail shops.

This shows that workers earning ZWL salaries that are unaligned with prevailing exchange rate movements have indeed been reduced into paupers. The importance of public services and public servants cannot be overemphasized. They allow the government to respond to natural disasters, efficiently manage immigration systems, ensure safe food & medicines, safeguard national security, and upliftment of vulnerable groups and marginalized communities among many other key functions. Given the vitality of public services in moving the nation forward, the proposed salary review is crucial as it will go a long way in boosting the morale of public workers and reducing the ongoing brain drain in the public sector.

However, the increment on the ZWL salary component will likely increase ZWL liquidity in the market thus fueling exchange rate instability. This will in turn exert a knock-on effect on prices leading to another round of pricing madness particularly in the formal sector. Although the increase of the USD salary component is the only practical non-inflationary way of cushioning civil servants which will also result in a real jump in consumer spending, it risks increasing the creation/printing of local USDs by the central bank. Treasury spending is spiking unsustainably as it recently took over forex surrender requirements which were previously settled by RBZ and also assumed all external financial obligations owed by the RBZ. These are additions to an already elevated fiscal spending path supporting the agricultural sector (winter wheat farming & procurement of grains by GMB), funding ongoing infrastructure projects, and providing resources for the 2023 harmonized elections slated for 23 August 2023. In the end, if the burgeoning fiscal spending is not curtailed within the sustainable territory will likely force authorities to print local versions of USDs. And these local USDs normally trade at a premium in the market thus completing a vicious cycle of currency instability.

2.2 Zimbabwe Secures US\$400 Million External Loan Facility

Zimbabwe has recently secured a US\$400 million loan facility from the African Export-Import (Afreximbank) bank. According to government officials, this loan facility is critical as it will buttress

¹ <https://zimcodd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/The-Weekend-Reader-9-June-2023.pdf>

and support economic measures put in place to date to stabilize and grow the economy.² During the presentation of the 2023 executive budget in November 2023, Prof. Mthuli Ncube indicated that Zimbabwe will utilize a US\$400 million external loan facility from Afreximbank to partly cover the 2023 budget deficit totaling ZWL\$575.5 billion (about US\$840.97 million using Nov 2023 official rate of ZWL/USD 654.93). The Treasury also proposed in November 2023 to finance the 2023 budget gap through the issuance of a US\$100 million domestic bond, ZWL10 billion changes in bank balances, and issuance of treasury bills (TBs) valued at ZWL82.8 billion. The excessive ZWL decline experienced in 1HY23 has wiped out the real budget value and will force authorities to borrow more ZWLs than initially projected.

While borrowing to finance budget gaps is the norm globally, nations must ensure that borrowing is consistent with fiscal spending and deficit plans. Generally, new borrowing should be carefully set to keep public debt on a sustainable path. Public debt is considered to be sustainable if the government can meet all its current and future obligations without exceptional financial assistance or going into default.³ There are many indicators of debt sustainability which include inter alia the debt-to-GDP ratio, debt service-to-exports, debt-to-budget revenue, and debt service-to-budget revenue among others. Most of these indicators, however, show that Zimbabwe's debt is now unsustainable. For instance, a 2022 Public Debt Report by ZIMCODD established that Zimbabwe has one of the lowest reserves-to-external debt ratios and one of the highest external debt service-to-exports ratios in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.⁴ Hence, it is now not feasible for Zimbabwe to keep on accumulating debt as this will jeopardize its financial position.

Even conservative official debt statistics show that the nation is in dire need of a debt restructuring. Debt restructuring provides debt relief by reducing interest rates on loans and or extending loan repayment schedules by offering more time for repayment. As of September 2022, official total public and publicly guaranteed (PPG) debt stood at US\$17.6 billion, up from US\$17.2 billion recorded in December 2021. Also, external debt figures show that almost 50% of US\$14.04 billion external debt are arrears and penalties thus illuminating rising debt distress. A granular analysis shows that of this total external debt, 50% is owed to bilateral creditors followed by RBZ debt (24%), multilateral creditors (18.4%), and blocked funds (16.6%). From the domestic front, compensation of Former Farm Owners (FFOs) amounting to US\$3.5 billion (95%) represents a significant share of the domestic debt.

Despite this, the appetite for borrowing by Treasury continues to persist. An unsustainable debt level is now greatly undermining public service delivery.⁵ For instance, the nation is estimated to be seating on a housing backlog of two (2) million housing units yet the 2023 budget statement shows that the government is aiming to cover only 22.5% of the backlog (450 000 units) by the

² <https://www.chronicle.co.zw/zimbabwe-secures-us400-million-facility-from-afreximbank/>

³ <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/2020/09/what-is-debt-sustainability-basics>

⁴ https://zimcodd.org/?sdm_process_download=1&download_id=6303

⁵ <https://www.newsday.co.zw/local-news/article/200003624/housing-backlog-shoots-to-2m>

end of 2025. Also, approximately 70% of local authorities (LAs) across the country are experiencing dilapidating social amenities while public social spending in the last decade has failed significantly to meet the 4.5% Social Policy for Africa (2008) benchmark.

The previous debt default of the early 2000s coupled with the subsequent accumulation of arrears and penalties over the years are limiting the nation's ability to access concessionary credit lines offered by multilateral lenders like World Bank and IMF. As such, authorities are now relying on resource-backed loans (RBLs). These are loans given to a government where repayment is either made directly in natural resources or from a resource-related future income stream. RBLs have dire developmental impacts as they are fuelling unsustainable resource extraction leading to environmental degradation, pollution of air & water sources, forced displacements of communities, farmer-miner conflicts, and human-wildlife conflicts. The RBLs are also accrued in secrecy thereby rendering Parliament ineffective and increasing the chances of corruption and illicit transactions. Last but not least, RBLs are not mutually beneficial because they mostly cater to those in negotiations and promote violations of labor laws and mining workers' rights.

Zimbabwe's continued borrowing also risks complicating and derailing the ongoing arrears clearance and debt resolution strategy. To receive full debt relief from creditors, the nation must implement sound economic, governance, and land tenure reforms as required by its creditors. These reforms will enable the government to step up efforts to boost domestic resource mobilization to finance economic growth plans as external debt accumulation weighs down economic growth.

3. Articles for Further Reading

3.1 Why “Zimbabwe as a Country Has Moved to South Africa”

Notwithstanding massive infrastructure projects and other developmental initiatives being undertaken in Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwean development question remains debatable. A majority of the ongoing initiatives are proving to be insufficient in capturing the reality of the challenges being faced by the citizens. This scenario leaves many wondering whether the government is deliberately not prioritizing issues affecting the citizens culminating in colossal migration in search of greener pastures.

There is no consensus on the exact number of Zimbabweans that have left the country in search of greener pastures. Nonetheless, it is believed that approximately 4-7 million Zimbabweans have left the country since 2000. Although stating with precision the exact figure remains highly problematic, 5 million is generally accepted. About 1 million of the 5 million in the diaspora are in South Africa. Bloomberg concurs with the above by stating that, 85% of the Zimbabwean diaspora population is in South Africa⁶. At the same time, the African National Congress (ANC) Secretary-General, Fikile Mbalula alleged that “*Zimbabwe as a country has moved to South Africa, from Gugulethu to Khayelitsha, Sandton to Camps Bay, Umhlanga to Free state*” due to political, social

⁶ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-09-06/four-out-of-five-diasporan-zimbabweans-live-in-south-africa#xj4y7vzkg>

and economic challenges. In this regard, it is critical to give a glimpse reflection on some of the challenges that have facilitated the migration of Zimbabweans to the diaspora.

Political Challenges:

Zimbabwe is engulfed by a myriad of political challenges that have successfully undermined its democracy. Some of these challenges include but are not limited to the weaponization of the law, abductions, political prosecution⁷, illegalizing opposition political gatherings to mention but a few. The passing of the Private Voluntary Organisations (PVO) Bill in the House of Assembly and the Patriotic Bill further shrinks the civic space which is a prerequisite for the growth of democracy. Political prosecutions and weaponization of the law deter people from political participation, it subtly borders between authoritarianism and totalitarianism⁸. The abuse of state security to further political agenda has proven to be problematic in Zimbabwe. The 2000 and 2008 political violence serves as a clear testimony and a reason why many left Zimbabwe in sought of political asylum. Voting rigging has not brought anything better except for further isolation in the international community thereby undermining political and economic collaborations that promote national growth and transformation.

Economic Challenges:

Zimbabwe's economic meltdown started in the late 1990s and since then it has never recovered. Some of the economic challenges include but are not limited to, economies of affection, high and unsustainable debt-to-GDP ratio, high fiscal deficit, currency distortion, high inflation rate, meagre wages, three-tier pricing, limited availability of foreign currency, corruption in tender processes and the high unemployment rate to mention but a few. All these economic challenges have left the citizen vulnerable and undermined their livelihoods. A good example is that of the 2008 hyperinflation which wiped away the value of pensions and up to today pensioners have never recovered.

Social Challenges:

I. Food Insecurity

According to the 2022 ZimVAC Rural Livelihoods Assessment Report, approximately 38% of rural households are food insecure a number that is greatly disputable if one is to considered that more than half of the entire country is in extreme poverty⁹. Matebeleland North has the highest food insecurity with 58% of households in need of food support. Some of the areas within the same province with the most insecure households are Hwange which has 73%, Binga 71%, and Buhera 75%. In giving a holistic assessment, ZimVac puts the total number of individuals in need

⁷[bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=49659b9e3bc37e46JmltdHM9MTY4NzczNzYwMCZpZ3VpZD0wYWY3MDZkYS1hNThlTY1ZmItMjIjZS0xNGJjYTE4ZTYzYTkmaW5zaWQ9NTlwMA&ptn=3&hsh=3&fclid=0af706da-a58e-65fb-29ce-14bca18e63a9&psq=political+intimidation+zimbabwe+2023&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly9uZXdzZGF5LmNvLnp3L3RoZWluZGVwZW5kZW50L25ld3MvYXJ0aWNsZS8yMDAwMDY0NDQvYWxhcm0tYXMTcG9saXRpY2FsLXZpb2xlbmNlLWNhc2VzLXNwaWtlLWFOZWFKLW9mLTlwMjIjMtcG9sbHM&ntb=1](https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=49659b9e3bc37e46JmltdHM9MTY4NzczNzYwMCZpZ3VpZD0wYWY3MDZkYS1hNThlTY1ZmItMjIjZS0xNGJjYTE4ZTYzYTkmaW5zaWQ9NTlwMA&ptn=3&hsh=3&fclid=0af706da-a58e-65fb-29ce-14bca18e63a9&psq=political+intimidation+zimbabwe+2023&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly9uZXdzZGF5LmNvLnp3L3RoZWluZGVwZW5kZW50L25ld3MvYXJ0aWNsZS8yMDAwMDY0NDQvYWxhcm0tYXMTcG9saXRpY2FsLXZpb2xlbmNlLWNhc2VzLXNwaWtlLWFOZWFKLW9mLTlwMjIjMtcG9sbHM&ntb=1)

⁸ <https://www.mediasupport.org/blogpost/zimbabwe-headed-for-a-political-dead-heat-in-2023-election-raising-prospects-of-violence/>

⁹ 7.9 million Zimbabweans are in extreme poverty.

of food assistance at **5,6 million** out of a total population of 16,6 million¹⁰. ZimStat supports the above verdict by indicating that, “91% of Zimbabweans can no longer afford protein-rich food such as meat and are largely surviving on vegetables such as rape, covo, and chomolia, among others they can now afford”¹¹. Therefore, given the above scenario, one might argue that hunger-induced migration has caused many Zimbabweans to flee the country.

2. Drug Abuse

There is no general consensus on the number of youths involved in drugs, figures fluctuate between 57%¹² and 53.8%¹³ but what is clear is that over 50% of youth are victims of drug abuse. At the same time, the World Health Organisation’s report titled Mental Health Among Young People in African Region states that Zimbabwe has the highest number of 15 to 19-year-olds in Africa who engage in heavy “episodic drinking”, at 70.7% among males and 55.5%¹⁴ among females.

3. Unemployment

Zimbabwe’s unemployment rate is more than 60% with the majority of the citizens in the operating informal sector. The 2022 First Quarter Labour Force Survey Report by the Zimbabwe National Statistic Agency (ZimStat) concluded that 2.5 million youth between the age of 15 and 34 are unemployed¹⁵. 1.5 million of the 2.5 million aged between 15 to 24 had a national expanded unemployment rate of 66% while the national expanded unemployment rate for youths aged between 15-34 years was 57%¹⁶. The youths account for over 80% of the Zimbabwean population yet there are the most marginalized and vulnerable group of the population. Thus, leaving in search of greener pastures is the only hope for the youth and the Zimbabwean unemployed population.

4. Weak Public Service Delivery

Public service delivery has collapsed in Zimbabwe, with the government failing to provide basic services¹⁷. Health services are in disarray with dilapidating and infrastructure gaps. The same applies to water and sanitation. The 2022 ZIMVAC report noted that the lack of access to clean and safe water remains high. A situation that exposes Zimbabweans to medieval diseases such as cholera¹⁸. The situation is worsened by the government's failure to provide adequate public transport. At the same time, local authorities are failing to collect refuse. The government’s

¹⁰ <https://zimtrending.co.zw/2023/01/24/3-7-million-zimbabweans-relying-on-food-aid/#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20Zimbabwe%20Vulnerability%20Assessment%20Committee%2C%20the,population%20of%2016%2C%20million%20people%20having%20insufficient%20food.>

¹¹ <https://www.newsday.co.zw/local-news/article/200010077/food-poverty-continues-to-haunt-zim-wb>

¹² Maraire, T., & Chethiyar, S. D. (2020). Drug and substance abuse problem by the Zimbabwean youth: A psychological perspective. Practitioner Research, 2, 41-59

¹³ The 2022 ZimVAC Rural Livelihoods Assessment Report

¹⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/redirect?q=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.who.int%2Finitiatives%2Fwho-special-initiative-for-mental-health>

¹⁵ <https://bullszimbabwe.com/over-2-5-million-unemployed-youths-cause-for-concern/>

¹⁶ <https://www.africa-press.net/zimbabwe/all-news/over-2-5-million-zimbabwean-youths-jobless>

¹⁷ <https://zimcodd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/April-2023-SITREP.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://reliefweb.int/updates?list=Zimbabwe%3A%20Cholera%20Outbreak%20-%20Feb%202023%20Updates&advanced-search=%28D51627%29>

failure to provide service delivery is largely due to the collapse of the public sector which has now become a haven of corruption, mismanagement, favoritism, and tender-partnership.

Although the above issues are not enough to explain the mass exodus of citizens to the diaspora, they are sufficient to bring to light the reasons why Zimbabweans are running away from their country. The remarks by the ANC Secretary General, are a reflection of how Zimbabweans are weighing on South Africa's public service delivery. A scenario that has for a long time facilitated xenophobia. Therefore, given the above the Zimbabwean government must re-orient its development plans to capture the reality being experienced by Zimbabweans on the ground. Until and unless, the social, political, and economic challenges threatening the citizens are addressed, Zimbabweans will continue to flee the country and remain a laughing stock.

3.2 SI 143 of 2023: Correction of Amendments to the Constitution

The recently issued Statutory Instrument (SI) 114 of 2023 on the Statute Law Compilation and Revision (Correction of Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment No. 2 Act 2021) “amends” section 268 of the Constitution. Section 268 provides that each province or metropolitan province has a council and that ten women must be elected to those positions under a proportional representation system, this therefore, excludes men. SI 114 of 2023 seeks to remedy this through the inclusion of both male and female candidates to be nominated.

Statute Law Compilation and Revision (Correction of Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 2) Act, 2021) Notice, 2023

THE Law Reviser, in terms of section 11C of the Statute Law Compilation and Revision Act [*Chapter 1:03*], hereby makes the following notice:—

Title

1. This notice may be cited as the Statute Law Compilation and Revision (Correction of Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 2) Act, 2021) Notice, 2023.

Amendments to Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 2) Act, 2021

2. The provisions of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 2) Act, 2021 specified in the first column of the Schedule are corrected to the extent set out opposite thereto in the second column.

<i>Provision</i>	<i>Extent of correction</i>
Section 268 (“Provincial and metropolitan councils”)	In subsection (1)(c) by the deletion of “ten women” and the substitution of “ten persons”.
Section 268	In subsection (2) by the deletion of “A woman” and the substitution of “A person”.
Section 268	In subsection (3) by the deletion of “the women” and the substitution of “the persons”.
Section 268	In subsection (3)(b) by the deletion of “in which women with disabilities are included” and the substitution of “in which male and female candidates are listed alternately, every list being headed by a female candidate”.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note does not form part of the notice, but merely explains its contents)

The Constitution of Zimbabwe (No. 2) Act, 2021, as gazetted on 7th May, 2021, contained errors in provisions amending section 268 on Provincial and Metropolitan councils. The Hansard and Zoom audio recordings of the day do not reflect the gazetted amendments. The amendments appeared, by error, on the Votes and Proceedings of 15th April, 2021, which are titled “Advance Copy Uncorrected” and are subject to correction. Ref: National Assembly Hansard Vol 47 No. 41 of 15th April, 2021, pgs. 5161—5164. The object of this notice is to correct the identified errors.

*Supplement to the Zimbabwean Government Gazette Extraordinary dated the 20th June, 2023.
Printed by the Government Printer, Harare.*

While the exclusion of men may have been unintended, it must be borne in mind that been enacted in 2021, section 268 has been in effect without any objections, furthermore, once an election proclamation date has been made, a law affecting an election cannot be made or altered. Notwithstanding, amending a constitution is a significant process that requires specific procedures and approvals to ensure its legitimacy and democratic participation. Constitutional amendments typically follow specific procedures outlined within the Constitution itself. These procedures often involve a more comprehensive and deliberative process, such as parliamentary approval and public consultation, therefore falling outside the ambit of a Statutory Instrument.

Statutory instruments are regulations or rules created by government bodies to implement or supplement existing legislation. They are typically used to address specific details and procedures related to the application of the law. Constitutions, on the other hand, are fundamental documents that outline the principles, structure, and functions of a government. The process of amending the Constitution is outlined in section 328 of the Constitution itself. This process does not involve amending the constitution through a statutory instrument. Instead, it requires more extensive procedures, including parliamentary approval and a national referendum.

According to the Constitution of Zimbabwe, an amendment to the constitution can be initiated by a member of Parliament or by the President. The proposed amendment must be presented in the form of a Bill, which is then debated and voted upon by both houses of Parliament: the Senate and the National Assembly. For the amendment to pass, it requires the support of at least two-thirds of the total membership of each house of Parliament. If the amendment is approved by Parliament, it is then submitted to the President for assent. However, the process does not end with parliamentary approval. The Constitution of Zimbabwe mandates that any amendment that affects certain key provisions, such as those related to fundamental rights, the sovereignty of Zimbabwe, the term limit of the President, and the electoral system, must be put to a national referendum. In the referendum, the amendment must be approved by a majority of the voters. This means that a significant portion of the electorate must participate and vote in favor of the proposed amendment for it to be ratified.

It is important to note that amending the constitution in Zimbabwe is a significant undertaking and requires broad political support and public participation. The process aims to ensure that changes to the constitution reflect the will of the people and protect the fundamental principles of governance. In trying to rectify irregularities, and upholding the principles of equality and non-discrimination the rule of law must be upheld. Amending the supreme law of the land through statutory instruments at the 11th hour before elections sets a bad precedent and undermines the Constitution. The amendments should be made judiciously and must have been brought forth ahead of time.

3.3 Sakubva Urban Renewal Project delays to take off by 4 years.

Four years have passed since the inception of the Sakubva Urban Renewal project, however, Sakubva has stayed the same. The project was officially unveiled in December 2019. It is an initiative to modernize the outdated houses in Sakubva and transform Mutare into a Smart City in line with the government's 2030 Vision. Furthermore, this is consistent with SDG 11, which focuses on creating sustainable cities and communities. It is alleged in a newspaper article by Herald dated 19 December 2022 that BANC ABC provided an US\$8 million injection to the project.

The project is further supported by Zimbabwe's economic blueprint, the National Development Strategy I, which emphasizes the need for residents to have access to quality, affordable homes in both urban and rural locations. Some of the significant projects that were intended to be done include high-rise flats in Sakubva, the refurbishment of the Sakubva Flea Market, the long bus terminus, the Sakubva Beithall and Sakubva Stadium, and the Sakubva Vegetable Market. It's important to note that 4 years have passed and none of the projects have started. Sakubva was built in 1925 as a colonial settlement for people who worked at the Nyakamete industrial site, which was once one of Zimbabwe's major sources of foreign currency and local economic development because of companies such as Boarder Timbers, Tanganda, PG, and Carina. Residents are still living in substandard homes that were even condemned during the 1970s by council officials. It is 43 years after the country gained its independence and people still live in those houses. For instance, in Matida flats 3 families are sharing one room and the hygiene levels are very poor.



After it has been alleged that the investor who expressed interest in the project in 2019 failed to complete it, NSSA took over the project and invested US\$6 million in it in August 2022. Four years have passed since the groundbreaking ceremony, yet the residents of Sakubva have seen no improvement in their quality of life. It is against this backdrop that we ought to look at the factors that militate against successive Urban Renewal projects in Zimbabwe:

1. Funding

One of the major challenges facing urban renewal projects in Zimbabwe is funding. Most of these projects require significant investments to succeed, but the government often cannot provide the necessary resources due to budget constraints.

2. Lack of Political Will

Another challenge is the lack of political will to implement urban renewal projects. Political leaders may be more interested in using resources for other priorities or may not see the value in investing in urban renewal.

3. Resistance to Change

Residents and business owners in areas targeted for urban renewal may resist change, particularly if they feel that they will be displaced or negatively impacted. This can lead to delays in projects or even project failure. Additionally, the local authority does not have adequate shelter for the affected families during the project implementation.

4. Lack of Technical Expertise

The lack of technical expertise in urban planning and development is also a challenge. There may not be enough qualified professionals to oversee and manage urban renewal projects.

5. Corruption

Corruption is a significant problem in Zimbabwe, and it can affect urban renewal projects. Bribes and other forms of corruption can lead to substandard construction, delays in project completion, and

mismanagement of funds. For instance, there is lack of a strong monitoring and evaluation to ensure there is progress and transparency in the use of public funds.

6. Environmental Concerns

Urban renewal projects can have significant environmental impacts, particularly if they involve demolishing existing structures or constructing new infrastructure. It is important to ensure that projects are designed and executed with environmental considerations in mind.

3.4 Maternity Woes: The Rising Cost of Living in Zimbabwe

Whether it's seven babies dying in one night or women delivering under candlelight, pregnant women giving birth in long queues, the Zimbabwean public health care system has seen it all. Not withholding the uncaring and insensitive nature of health professionals plus the astronomical price tag associated with the sector. Amongst the most shocking news one will hear from the health sector is that the total cost of giving birth can go up to US\$3000 at private hospitals¹⁹ and with the horrors associated with government hospitals, this is a route many women have been forced to tread on.

Zimbabwe loses 469 lives per every 100,000 live births and consequently has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in Sub-Saharan Africa. The World Health Organisation (WHO) reports that an estimated 80% of the nation's population uses traditional herbal medicine for its immediate health needs. Unsurprisingly, since pregnancy is not an illness, women cannot just go into forests and look for herbs to help them heal, they have however done the second-best thing. Pregnant women and their families have sought backyard nurses or midwives who are often untrained and conduct practice in places with questionable hygiene. This exposes women and their babies to infections and loss of life.

In January this year, the government of Zimbabwe made striking for more than 72 hours by public health care workers illegal as it declared them as essential service workers through the amendment of the Health Service Act.²⁰ While this might limit the bargaining power of the workers with their employers, it also means patients, in this case pregnant mothers are at the receiving end of the frustration of nurses and midwives. Strikes in the public health sector began as early as the 1980s and they have been a permanent fixture since then, only taking a small break during the Government of National Unity. The strikes have been caused by the frustrations of public health care workers where who often receive meagre salaries, do not have enough or even basic materials to conduct their work, and are often overworked.

The exodus of public health care workers has been a trending topic for years, meaning public health institutions are still understaffed. A recent survey by the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) revealed that only 4% out of 57% of district hospitals they surveyed have good healthcare facilities, with the majority (85%) reporting poor medical facilities. This

¹⁹ <https://youthvillage.co.zw/uncategorized/how-much-does-it-cost-to-deliver-a-baby-in-zimbabwe/>

²⁰ <https://globalpressjournal.com/africa/zimbabwe/zimbabwe-curbs-public-health-workers-right-protest-dire-conditions/>

means that the infrastructure and amenities of public health institutions are still dire. So, if the terrible circumstances that led many health professionals to protest over the past decades are still there, but they cannot protest or strike willingly anymore what do they do? With patients at their disposal? The answer to that can be safely left to conjecture.

Pregnant mothers at government hospitals have been said to not only pay the hospital fee but also must buy for themselves equipment such as gloves for nurses, drips amongst others especially if one is having a Caesarean operation. In a functional economy, these are things that should be found at hospitals and provided for free but it is a different case. Sometimes, all these materials total at least USD\$120 excluding US\$30 for scans as well as other hospital charges. Women that are forced to deliver at private hospitals must also deal with highly astronomical fees. Women that must have Caesarean operations have to contend with four different charges. The hospital fee, the doctor, the anesthetist, and the pediatrician for their babies. The doctors can charge anything from US\$300-800. Women end up riddled with a debt of between US\$1200-4000 on just one delivery.

The Second Republic has promised to ensure that the Treasury allocates at least 15 percent of its national budget to the healthcare sector, this was in the ZANU PF manifesto for the 2018 elections. It also promised to review medical professional remuneration and to rehabilitate and invest in new healthcare centers. But, close to five years later, the public health system in Zimbabwe remains a death trap! If we are to stop innocent babies and mothers from dying because of pregnancy, both promises will need to be kept. Children are an important part of growing any economy, but if we were to keep letting them die, what does the future hold for our country, for Vision 2030?