Weekly Economic Review

8 August 2023

RBZ Interbank Rate		Consumer Price Index		Blended Inflation	
WEEK 28.07.23	WEEK 04.08.23	JUN 566.36	JUL 479.97	JUN M.OM. 74.5%	JUL M.O.M. -15.3%
ZWL 4,517.14 per USD1	ZWL 4,556.16 Per USD1			JUN Y.O.Y 175.8%	JUL Y.O.Y 101.3%

avg. Parallel Market Rate		Consumption Poverty Line		Trade		
WEEK 21.07.23	WEEK 04.08.23	JUN	JUL		Exports	Imports
ZWL 6500	ZWL 5000	ZWL 91,172	ZWL99,545	MAY	US654.2m	US850.9m
				JUN	US641.3m	US726.4m

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1. Summary

This week's issue of the Weekly Economic Review (WER) comments on the contribution of the diaspora to Zimbabwe's economy, the impact of government guarantees on public debt, and the prospects & challenges of the ongoing structured debt dialogue platform. It also contains detailed articles covering inter alia Zimbabwe's humanitarian situation, the impact of disparities in pricing on marginalized communities, and the impact of artisanal small-scale mining activities on vital water sources.

2. Weekly Economic Review and Analysis

2.1 Diasporas Are Sustaining Zimbabwe's Economy

Zimbabwe has gone through severe economic fluctuations and deadly political violence that brought the entire economy to a standstill. Of particular mention is the 2007/8 record hyperinflation for a country in peacetime, the 2008 bloodbath harmonized election which saw thousands losing their lives, and the 2019/20 austerity measures. These events left no choice for both skilled & unskilled citizens but to flee the country seeking economic refuge (escape from their country because the immense poverty they live in prevents them from satisfying their basic human needs and political refuge (people fleeing persecution and conflict).

According to the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency's (ZimStat) 2022 census results, about 85% of 908,913 Zimbabwean emigrants are living in South Africa, 47,928 are in Botswana, 23,166 are in the United Kingdom and the balance is scattered across the rest of the world. Independent estimates, however, show that over three (3) million Zimbabweans are living abroad[1] and citizens continue to leave the country. For instance, statistics released by the United Kingdom (UK) Office of National Statistics indicate a 1,576% increase in Zimbabweans granted UK skilled work visas between 2019 and September 2022. This gives a clear picture of the extent of the brain drain being suffered by Zimbabwe due to the fragile political environment and a persistently faltering economy & its consequences on the human capital base, economic development, and innovation.

However, these Zimbabwean expats have become an invaluable asset to the country, immensely contributing to the alleviation of extreme poverty at a time the cost-of-living continues to balloon. For instance, the latest poverty statistics from the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe (CCZ) show that a family of six (6) required ZWL2.6 million in July 2023 for them not to be deemed poor, up 4% from ZWL2.5 million estimated in June 2023. Despite these statistics the lowest paid civil servants are earning ZWL250,000 on average (excluding USD allowance) and this shows that the formal working class is earning way below the poverty datum line.

1. https://allafrica.com/stories/201707060211.html

As such, most households are relying on diaspora remittances as a source of income to meet basic requirements such as food, accommodation, clothing, healthcare, and education. Latest statistics show that in the first half of 2023 (1HY23), the diasporas remitted US$919 million, up 15.3% from US$797.27 million received in 1HY22. In 2022, Zimbabwe received US$1.66 billion from the diaspora which is 16% higher than the US$1.43 billion received in 2021.

These diaspora remittances are playing a critical role in supporting consumer aggregate demand in the economy thereby helping to power industrial activity. Even though there was limited individual access to cheap foreign currency provided by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) through the auction system, many businesses were reportedly able to meet most of their operational USD demand from domestic foreign currency sales in 2022. In fact, RBZ provided only US$1.11 billion into the economy in 2022 through its auction system which is 49.5% lower than the total diaspora remittances received. Thus, showing the importance of diaspora remittances at times of great economic shocks like incessant currency fragility and chronic price inflation.[2] As such, it is high time the government recognizes the vitality of the diasporas by treating them equally with residents, for instance, by allowing a full diaspora vote.

2.2 Government Debt Guarantees Fueling Public Debt

The latest statistics from the Zimbabwe Public Debt Management Office (ZPDMO) show that Zimbabwe's total debt now constitutes 99.6% of national output (GDP). As of the end of December 2022, about 71.2% (US$12.8 billion) of total public and publicly guaranteed (PPG) debt is owed externally while domestic debt constitutes 28.8% (US$5.2 billion). Granular analysis of debt statistics indicates that Zimbabwe's external debt is being driven by arrears on interest (IRA), arrears on principal (PRA), and penalties. For example, of the reported bilateral & multilateral debt totaling US$8.59 billion, about 77.6% (US$6.67 billion) are arrears & penalties disaggregated as follows: IRA (24.9%), PRA (42.8%), and penalties (32.3%). To reduce these penalties, Treasury resumed quarterly token payments to multilateral creditors in March 2021 and to the Paris Club bilateral creditors in September 2021. To date, cumulative token payments made to multilateral and bilateral creditors are at US$109.8 million and US$9.6 million respectively.

While external debt is spiking largely due to the non-servicing of old debts, domestic debt is mounting as a result of non-payment of government-guaranteed debt by private beneficiaries/ individuals. This is shown by a low recovery rate on outstanding publicly guaranteed domestic debt. The following are some notable examples reported by ZPDMO:

- Of the ZWL4.5 billion (100% government guarantee) disbursed to farmers in the 2019/20 winter wheat cropping season by the Commercial Bank of Zimbabwe (CBZ) under the CBZ Agroyield, only ZWL1.5 billion was recovered, representing a paltry 38.5% recovery rate.
- Of the US$275 million disbursed to farmers during the 2020/21 maize & soybean cropping season (80% government guarantee), only US$56.4 million has been recovered representing a 20.5% recovery rate. The Government Guarantee claim of US$188 million has since been called up and the settlement will be borne by the public.
- Of the US$66.6 million disbursed to winter wheat farmers during the 2021 winter cropping season (73% government guarantee), only US$26.09 million has been recovered representing a 40% recovery rate. The Government Guarantee claim of US$29 million has since been called up and public settlement is in progress.

The fact that the government is forced to repay or assume guaranteed private-sector after the default by the loan beneficiaries like Command Agriculture farmers creates a moral hazard in that all those with guaranteed debt end up defaulting knowing that the State will help them to repay. This is further aided by impunity: Lack of rule of law is an incentive to debt management laws breachers. There are no penalties for not respecting debt management provisions. As such, Zimbabwe's debt crisis is partly a product of illegalities by the Executive arm of government, for example, the violation of the RBZ Act (overdraft), lack of recourse to Parliament, and violation of the Public Debt Management Act.

2.3 Prospects and Challenges of Zimbabwe's Structured Debt Dialogue Platform

As alluded to in the earlier sections, the combined bilateral and multilateral external PPG debt as of December 2022 totalled US$8.59 billion with about 77.6% being principal and interest arrears including penalties. The Treasury is facing a very limited fiscal space due to prolonged episodes of severe economic fluctuations. Hence, servicing old debts has become a burden with a higher opportunity cost. In her quest to resolve the debt crisis, Zimbabwe resumed quarterly token payments to multilateral creditors starting in March 2021: World Bank (US$1 million), AfDB (US$500,000), and EIB (US$100,000). In addition, in September 2021, Treasury started making quarterly token payments amounting to US$100,000 to each of the 16 members of the Paris Club bilateral creditors, a first in 20 years. This is a display of good gesture by acknowledging existing financial obligations--and has the potential to smoothen the ongoing engagement and re-engagement process with all creditors.

The Treasury has also improved on debt transparency relative to regional counterparts as shown by the annual publication of the Statement of Public Debt alongside the national budget as well as public dissemination of annual borrowing plans, citizens budgets, and budget performance reports. As a result, the country has moved 11 points up from 52/120 to 41/120 countries in terms of transparency of budget processes as shown by the latest findings by the International Budget Partnership (IBP) in its global open budget survey (OBS) in 2021. Within the African continent, the IBP ranked Zimbabwe third after South Africa and Benin. This shows that the nation is faring relatively well in the region in ensuring that the public has access to crucial budget information. This has allowed the participation of citizens in national budget formulation & implementation, and respecting the role of budget oversight and accountability institutions.

While there is still a lot to be desired in Zimbabwe's budget processes, the upward trajectory of its global ranking by IBP since 2019 is a welcome development. After developing its debt resolution strategy, the nation is undertaking high-level debt forums to provide a dialogue platform that is key to building confidence, consensus, and trust. The dialogue platform is also inclusive in the sense that it includes among others all creditors, development partners, government officials, Parliament, Sector Working Groups including CSOs, and technical advisors.

However, there are many headwinds to the ongoing SDP processes. To start with, it is likely going to be a daunting task for Zimbabwe to quickly find sponsor countries to provide concessional bridge loans to clear arrears & penalties that are now constituting more than 70% of bilateral and multilateral debt stock. This is because the cost of borrowing is rising globally as major central banks continue to hike benchmark policy rates to tame ravaging global price inflation. Advanced nations are seized with raising funds to support the recovery of their economies from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war.

Sponsor nations are advanced nations that usually advocate for strong reforms to promote democracy, respect for human & property rights, fiscal discipline, fiscal transparency, efficient public service delivery, and private sector-led economies among others. From a development economic perspective, these reforms are key to entrenching constitutionalism, strengthening oversight & accountability institutions, as well as ensuring that public resources are utilized efficiently and quality public services are delivered in an affordable and accessible manner. A granular analysis shows that Zimbabwe's debt crisis is partly emanating from the existence of porous public financial management (PFM) mechanisms that are enabling revenue leakages.

Authorities are failing to embrace and fully implement PFM and other reforms as per the minimum expectations held by Zimbabwe's major creditors. There are rising cases of the non-implementation of audit recommendations from the Office of the Auditor-General (OAG). The prevailing regressive tax regime such as the 2% Intermediated Money Transfer Tax (IMTT) is militating against the formalization of the informal sector economy while social spending to cushion the vulnerable is found wanting. In addition, the recommendations of the Motlanthe Commission are yet to be implemented which is against the spirit of national building through unity, peace, and reconciliation.

Furthermore, there is a continuous disregard for constitutionalism as shown by repeated violations of legal statutes such as the Public Debt Management Act. The embracing of catch-and-release tactics on corrupt public officials and politically connected individuals risk plunging the nation into a complete state of anarchy. In both mainstream and alternative media, there are numerous reports of political violence, voter intimidation particularly in rural areas, the politicization of government-provided aid, increased police brutality, banning of opposition rallies, brazen capture of the judiciary, unwarranted arrests of human rights activists, and incarceration of political activists. All these have a high likelihood of derailing the ongoing negotiations with creditors.

Even though Treasury is reportedly undertaking debt data validation and reconciliation exercises with its creditors, it is yet to undertake a comprehensive & independent debt audit. This is key in informing the scale and nature of public debts, which are often not transparently publicized. Regular debt audits will also become building blocks to popularise the discussion on the legitimacy of certain debts and whether they should be repaid or not. Again, Zimbabwe is struggling to adhere to its own debt management strategy to ensure that the government's financing needs and its payment obligations are met at the lowest possible cost and consistent with a prudent degree of risk such as interest rate and currency risks. Failure to stick to a clear debt strategy makes it difficult for authorities to avoid an accumulation of arrears and penalties even if Zimbabwe is to get the relief it is pursuing under the current debt resolution strategy.

Furthermore, based on prior official statements by some of Zimbabwe's creditors, it will be difficult for Zimbabwe to gain support to access debt relief such as debt cancellation through the HIPC initiative. For instance, the IMF previously indicated that Zimbabwe is not eligible for debt relief through the HIPC model because it is not a very poor country[2]. The nation is endowed with huge known deposits of precious, semi-precious, base, and rare earth minerals that are in global demand. It also has an underutilized agriculture sector and boasts one of the best human capital bases in the African continent as measured by the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI).

2. https://insiderzim.com/zimbabwe-is-not-poor-imf/

What this means is that the current challenges such as the debt crisis and weak currency bedeviling Zimbabwe are purely endogenous. These can only be resolved internally through concerted efforts to combat public corruption, misuse & embezzlement of funds, resource misgovernance through excessive illicit dealings, and the government's fondness for wasteful command economy characterized by fiscal and monetary indiscipline.

3. Articles for Further Reading

3.1 Zimbabwean Livelihood Situation

The humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe is still fragile. The country continues to experience climate-related shocks like floods and droughts that are made worse by El Nino events, leading to a shortage of food and water. Typhoid, cholera, and measles outbreaks frequently occur as well. The humanitarian situation needs immediate redress if Zimbabwe is to attain its middle-class aspirations as prescribed in the National Development Strategy (NDS) 1.

The infrastructural gaps coupled with under-expenditure in the health sector have also worsened the humanitarian situation in the country. This can be evidenced by the fact that Zimbabwe is still wrestling with medieval diseases such as typhoid, cholera, and measles which can be easily addressed through optimum expenditure on health, hygiene, water, and sanitation. As of June 2023, approximately 3,182 cholera suspected cases had been recorded with 784 confirmed cases. The Case Fatality Rate was 2.3% which is significantly higher than the 1% threshold set by the World Health Organization (WHO). Therefore, there is a need for immediate intervention to reduce the mortality rate.

According to the ECHO factsheet, currently, 3.82 million people in rural areas and 1.63 million people living in urban areas experience food insecurity. This assertion is validated by the rural and urban 2022 ZimVAC Livelihoods Assessment Report.[3] Food insecurity in the country is reported at a time when the government is declaring that it is food secure.[4] This is aggravated by the fact that approximately 4.8 million children are suffering from Severe Acute Malnutrition.[5] In July 2023, the World Bank reported that Zimbabwe is ranked third with respect to global food inflation, standing at 256%, after Lebanon at 280% and Venezuela at 414%.[6] Thereby making it difficult for the majority of the citizens to secure food.

The 2023 UNICEF Half Year Humanitarian Report shows that the humanitarian situation in the country is in dire situation. Approximately, 2 million children and 3 million adults are said to need humanitarian assistance.[7]

3. https://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/echo-factsheet-zimbabwe-last-updated-07-03-2023/
4. https://zwnews.com/president-mnangagwa-declares-zim-food-secure-as-5-7m-face-hunger/#:~:text=Jan%2026%2C%202023%20%7C%20Zim%20Latest%20President%20Emmerson,President%20Mnangagwa%20claimed%20that%20Zimbabwe%20is%20wheat%20sufficient
5. https://zimcodd.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/ZIMCODD-April-Policy-Digest.pdf
6. https://www.thezimbabwemail.com/economic-analysis/world-bank-reveals-zimbabwean-food-inflation-rate/
7. https://www.unicef.org/media/143651/file/Zimbabwe-Humanitarian-SitRep-Mid-Year-2023.pdf

All this is happening at a time when the government is focusing on winning elections rather than the welfare and well-being of the citizens. It is worrying and disturbing that corruption and abuse of public resources also continue to proliferate and perpetrators of the same are politically insulated against prosecution. Therefore, there is a need for the government to redress the current humanitarian challenges being experienced by the citizens. In doing so, it is critical to note that, the humanitarian situation presented here is just but a glimpse of the quagmire that citizens are encountering.

3.2 A Snapshot into the Impact of Disparities in Pricing on Marginalised Communities

In a country like Zimbabwe, economic fluctuations can have a profound impact on its citizens, particularly those who are already vulnerable and marginalized. The scenario of prices of basic commodities decreasing, while food basket prices increase together with the costs of vital services like healthcare, electricity, and water creates a complex web of challenges for the poor and marginalized communities. The Consumer Council of Zimbabwe (CCZ) has indicated that a family of six now requires $2,6 million a month to survive, up from $2,5 million in June. This amounts to about US$540, using the official exchange rate, at the time that this article was written.

The CCZ indicated that although prices of basic commodities have decreased, the cost of utilities has gone up.Lowering prices for basic goods, including food items, might initially appear as a positive development for all citizens. It could ostensibly alleviate the burden on households struggling to make ends meet. However, a deeper analysis reveals that this scenario may not entirely benefit the marginalized groups. For subsistence communities, food expenditures form a significant portion of their budgets, and a reduction in food prices might have a limited impact on their overall financial stability due to the rising cost of healthcare and utilities such as electricity and water. As the costs of healthcare, electricity, and water increase, the already precarious situation for the poor and marginalized communities worsens. Access to proper healthcare is vital for these groups, yet higher medical expenses deter them from seeking necessary treatment. With basic healthcare becoming unaffordable, the marginalized may have to resort to suboptimal health solutions or forego treatment altogether, jeopardizing their well-being.

The divergence between decreasing food prices and escalating utility costs highlights the growing inequality within society. While the affluent can weather the burden of higher utilities, the marginalized are disproportionately affected. The inability to access basic services like clean water and electricity not only undermines their quality of life but also hampers their prospects for education, employment, and overall social advancement.

This exacerbates existing inequalities and restricts the potential for upward mobility. As the costs of utilities rise, households from marginalized communities are forced to allocate more of their limited resources to these essentials. This, in turn, reduces the funds available for other crucial aspects of life, such as education and skills development. Children's access to education becomes compromised due to financial constraints, perpetuating the cycle of poverty. Furthermore, the increased burden on household budgets may limit an individual's ability to seek better employment opportunities.

The scenario of increasing food basket prices juxtaposed with the rising costs of vital services exposes the harsh reality faced by poor and marginalized communities in Zimbabwe. These disparities not only widen the gap between different segments of society but also hinder the upward mobility and overall well-being of those who are marginalized and already facing numerous challenges. The government must recognize these intricacies and devise strategies that address the complex web of issues marginalized and poor communities encounter. A holistic approach is necessary to create a more equitable society where access to essential goods and services is not determined by one's socioeconomic background.

3.3 Detrimental Impact of Artisanal Small-Scale Mining Activities in Penhalonga on Mutare City's Vital Water Sources

Since 2020, mining activities have made residents in Penhalonga and Mutare feel insecure every time they go to fetch water. Mercury and cyanide deposits from artisanal gold mines in Penhalonga were discovered in Lake Alexander in March last year, around 32 kilometres from the mines, which supply 25% of Mutare's water. More than two years have passed since a demand for prompt action to protect water sources was issued. Artisanal gold mining operations are endangering the ecosystem, and relocated farmers are now in grave danger due to Mutare River pollution.

Residents in Penhalonga have also reported that they are drinking contaminated water that contains cyanide and mercury traces. They are frightened that they are being gradually poisoned because the water has turned a brownish colour; a sign of pollution. The Redwing Mine concession is owned by the South African mining firm Metallon Corporation, however, it is now managed by Better Brands, a company owned by politically exposed businessman Scot Sakupwanya, since 2019. The company's operations entail a payment system in which it subcontracts mining to artisanal miners and is held responsible for the environmental disaster. Under the agreement, artisanal miners receive 40% of the gold extracted by the mining firm.

Artisanal miners transport their ore to a Better Brands milling facility, where mercury, is used to extract gold from ore, while others send it to private millers, who dump the toxic waste into surrounding river streams.

Other illicit miners engage in alluvial gold mining, which again involves the use of mercury. Cyanide and mercury are both intended to be closely monitored to prevent their escape into surrounding rivers and dams. With no proper monitoring this has contributed to serious water pollution in the mining surrounds.

According to the mining regulations of 2002, no mining activity might start in the country until the State-owned Environmental Management Agency (EMA) issues an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) license, which is a planning tool used to assess potential environmental impacts and devise mitigation measures. However, inhabitants of Penhalonga and Mutare allege that the process was tainted by major corruption, with some residents being paid to influence the outcome of the EIA. Unregulated artisanal mining can have a substantial impact on water sources and people's lives in Penhalonga and Mutare. Here are a few examples of the effects:

- **Water Pollution:** Artisanal mining often involves the use of hazardous chemicals such as mercury and cyanide to extract minerals. Improper handling and disposal of these chemicals can contaminate water sources, leading to pollution. Polluted water can have severe health implications for both humans and wildlife, as it can cause poisoning and other waterborne diseases.
- **Depletion of Water Resources:** Artisanal mining necessitates a significant amount of water for mineral processing. As a result, water sources might be depleted or they can totally dry up, particularly in locations where water supply is already scarce. Water scarcity may adversely affect local communities who use water for consumption and livelihood dependant activities such as agriculture.
- **Erosion and Sedimentation:** Artisanal miners routinely dig up riverbanks and streambeds to gain access to minerals. This excavation may cause increased erosion and sedimentation, resulting in water quality damage. Sedimentation can choke waterways, damaging aquatic habitats and restricting community access to clean water.
- **Loss of Biodiversity:** Artisanal mining activities, such as deforestation and excavation, can lead to the destruction of ecosystems and habitats. This can result in the loss of biodiversity, including the disappearance of plant and animal species that rely on the affected water sources. The loss of biodiversity can disrupt local ecosystems and have long-term ecological consequences.
- **Social and Economic Impacts:** Artisanal mining can have both beneficial and negative social and economic effects on local populations. While mining activities can provide revenue and job possibilities, they can also cause social conflicts such as disputes over mining rights and resource competitiveness. Furthermore, the environmental degradation caused by artisanal mining can have a severe impact on agriculture, fishing, and other traditional livelihood sources resulting in economic hardship for local communities.

3.3 Amacimbi: Another Natural Resource Tale Gone Bad

Amacimbi/madora also known as mopane worms are an important source of protein and micro-nutrients for many Zimbabweans. In Zimbabwe, mopane worms are mainly found in the southern districts (Chivi, Mwenezi, Mberengwa, Beitbridge, Chiredzi, Matobo and Gwanda). A stone-age pit discovered at Pomongwe Cave (located inside the Matobo National Park); Zimbabwe showed a deposit of dried mopane worms that are believed to be almost 6,000 years old. Research has found that mopane worms are not only good for eating from a nutritional standpoint, but they may be key to maintaining the ecological balance of the dry bush they inhabit. Over the years the existence of the mopane worms has come under threat from human habitats.

As the country sinks into economic meltdown; its citizens have been forced to make adjustments in-order to cope with the harsh lived realities. In a country where close to 90% of the population is unemployed, parents have had to make serious adjustment so as to stay afloat. This has seen a number of rural and urban dwellers alike turning to the lucrative trade of amacimbi harvesting to feed their families. Amacimbi harvesting used to be a trade mainly for the rural folks who would seasonally harvest the worms after the rainy season for resale. However, recent years have seen more urban dwellers going into rural areas such as Gwanda and Matobo to harvest the delicacy with a market value of between 250 rands to 700 rands a bucket. This has meant a new kind of struggle not only between the urban and rural folks but also between the harvesters and the rural district councils that are left to clean up the mess left after the harvesting process.

Whereas in previous years the mopane worms were left to fall from the leaves and trunks of the mopane tree; a signal that they were ready for picking this is no longer the case in recent years. This practice has been discarded by the new generation of desperate mopane worm harvesters who are known to forcibly pluck the worms from trees while even going to the extent of cutting down the source trees as a means to access them. This poses a threat on the ecosystem as deforestation; if the breeding grounds for the mopane worms are destroyed there is a strong likelihood that the creatures might become extinct in the coming years. To deal with this possible threat of extinction Matebeleland has come up with the setting up of mopane worm breeding centres. These breeding centres can be found in places like Gwanda as means to try and preserve the mopane worm for future generations.

Unfortunately, deforestation and the uncontrolled harvesting of mopane worms is not the only challenge presented by the resource rush. Harvesters are known to camp for weeks or months in wooded areas where the worms are found. Noting that the wooded areas are not designed for human habitat; the harvesters tend to openly defecate in open areas. They have little or no respect for the preservation of the environment which they only see as means to end in sustaining their livelihoods. Once they leave following their seasonal harvesting activities, they often leave a trail of filth and environmental pollution.

The harvesting of mopane works has exposed the harsh reality that although the creatures have been in rural communities for decades this has not directly resulted in feasible development for any of them. The story of amacimbi/madora harvesting is yet another sad story in the tale of natural resource governance that does not adequately benefit the locals. It is the local communities of Mangwe, Matobo and Gwanda whose tax monies will be used to pay the labour used to clean up the mess left by harvesters. It is still these local communities that will have to deal with the looming effects of deforestation because of the reckless cutting down of trees by harvesters. Finding any sort of employment in the rural areas is difficult and coupled with competitiveness between the locals and urban dwellers in harvesting the worms has made the economic landscape even tougher.

The Gwand Rural District seeks to put in place a policy that will ensure locals are the biggest benefactors of mopane worm harvesting with preference being given to locals. The local authority also intends to ensure that those harvesting the worms for commercial purposes will need permission from the authorities to do so with a register being kept for all harvesters. Although it is commendable that local authorities led by Gwanda Rural District Council and Matobo following suit, are crafting policies to regulate the harvesting of amacimbi/madora it does not unfortunately address the problem in its entirety.

Key questions continue to be asked on why local communities are the last to benefit from natural resources found in their backyards. This benefit questions remains a challenge; cutting across all sectors where natural resources are concerned. Questions have been raised on why resource rich communities such as Marange with its diamonds, Mutoko where internationally acclaimed granite is mined and Gwanda with its abundance of gold and mopane worms still has locals who go without food, quality healthcare or education which should be guaranteed by their resources. It becomes clear that there is no point of being custodians of natural resources if they do not uplift the lives of the same; the resource curse concerns are again raised.