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LETTER TO THE READER

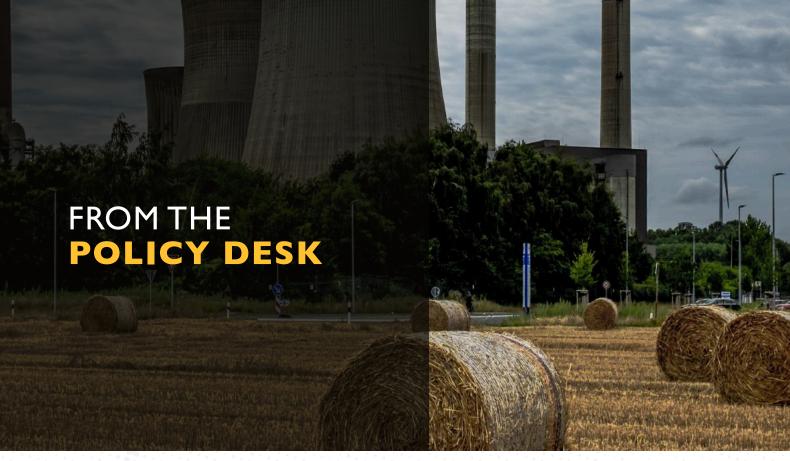
Coalition on Zimbabwe Debt Development (ZIMCODD) is a pro-poor Social and Economic Justice movement concerned with improving livelihood indicators for all Zimbabweans. Through our work in 2023, we witnessed an increasing debt burden, worsening inflation, increasingly shrinking civic space, high taxes, erosion of incomes and runaway cost of living. The economic outlook is bleak, especially considering the projected El Nino conditions which will reduce harvest from the agricultural sector, an anchor of our economy and livelihoods.

In the same vein, prospects for external investment are reduced by the pervasive corruption and protection of perpetrators by the political elite, juxtaposed by the persecution of human rights defenders. The picture is desolate but as a movement, we are strengthened by the desire to see economic justice for all and the affirmation of our readers, partners and participants in our activities. 2023 was the first year of implementation for our new strategy which runs up to 2030, centevred around two pillars of Fiscal and Trade Justice. 2024 is a new platform to bolster this strategy and we believe through the established partnerships in civil society, government and the media, we will achieve!

In this issue of the BreakFree, we detail stories of change that cover the work we did in 2023 and set a base for our approach in 2024. Our hope is you enjoy and also draw inspiration to continue in your effort to support us.

Enjoy!

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Zimbabwe's policy formulation, implementation and evaluation have always been wrapped with controversy as vested interest takes precedence over national interest. Policy networks and communities have not successfully advanced the interest of the citizen every time. While this view is watertight other policies have emanated as a response to challenges that citizens are encountering thereby advancing their interests.

A review of some of the policies enacted in 2023 is critical to determine the thrust behind policy formulation, implementation and evaluation in Zimbabwe. It is also important in making policy recommendations and predictions that can guide Zimbabwe on its development trajectory as highlighted in the National Development Strategy I (NDS I).

Local Authorities Blueprint on Service Delivery & NDS I

Currently, the NDSI is the nerve centre for policy formulation in Zimbabwe as it is the main development policy blueprint that sets the footing for other policies. Thus, every other policy must be in alignment with the ethos of the NDSI. This can

be evidenced by the Local Authorities Blueprint on Service Delivery, a policy which seeks to enhance optimum service delivery across the country. While the blueprint signifies the government's commitment rejuvenate service delivery in a way, it falls short of an effective holistic assessment that robustly strives to satisfy the needs of citizens. The situation is further aggravated by the fact that, before the formulation of the Local Authorities Blueprint on Service Delivery the government had already threatened to take over councils. A scenario which shows the government's appetite to interfere with the operations of Local Authorities (LAs). LAs have always been subjected to partisan politics since the emergency of the new millennium as the government deliberately undermines their optimum efficiency through constant interference. The scrapping of the Executive Mayor post in 2007 has created a leeway for the government undermine service delivery. Therefore, the Local Authorities Blueprint on Service Delivery should be examined under the prism of vested to determine the interest consequences of the policy thereof.

Formalization Strategy

In addition, since 2018 the government has been highlighting its ambition to harness the informal economy by formalising it and tapping into its unexplored revenue. The same sentiments were echoed by the President in 2023 when he announced the government's plans to craft a formalisation strategy. Nonetheless, while this is important to expand the revenue tax base, the formalisation strategy must be cognizant of the gender dynamics and imbalances that exist in the informal sector. It must be tailor-made to guarantee gender equity. The policy must prioritise the vulnerable and marginalised groups such as women, Persons with Disability and youth. There is a need for the establishment of a vulnerable funding pool. At the same time, the government must set aside at least 10% of its procurement contracts for the same. Government public procurement or spending must also target the informal sector, thus, to mean at least 30% of government procurement must be from the informal sector, 10% of this must be earmarked for the vulnerable groups mentioned above.

Sugar Production Monopoly

Moreover, the government's policy towards sugar production monopoly was also witnessed in the first quarter of the year through the proposed Amendment Bill of the Sugar Production and Control Act. Although the policy stance can be regarded as positive strides towards trade justice and livelihoods. The Bill has not yet taken off, this might be due to deliberate sabotage in the policy communities and networks as there are vested interests that are threatened in the sub-government by its passing.

Public Resource Management

In the Public Finance Management (PFM) realm, the year 2023 witnessed one of the most controversial policies through SI 156 of 2023 Presidential Measures) (Temporary Powers Amendment) (Investment Laws Regulations, 2023. It is a policy that has been said to foster individual interest rather than national interest. SI 156 of 2023 changes the name of the Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF) to Mutapa Investment Fund (MIF). While efforts are already underway to sanitise this, more questions than answers have been boggling the minds of citizens, academia and even some policymakers. The intention of renaming SWF to MIF is far from national development and growth but close to personal wealth accumulation and abuse of public funds This is because the renaming itself has the potential of undermining prudent public resources management by ceding more power to individuals connected to the highest echelons of power.

This view can be reinforced by General Notice 1546 of 2023. A policy that was meant to facilitate the creation of an opaque environment surrounding the operations of the MIF. General Notice 1546 of 2023, exempted all entities that are under the MIF from being put under the spotlight of the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act (Chapter 22:23). These

entities include ZUPCO, Kuvimba, Cold Storage Commission, NRZ, Netone, Defold Mine, Telecel, Power Tel, Hwange Colliery, Cotcco, Zimbabwe Power Company, Petrotrade, Powertel, Allied Timbers, Air Zimbabwe and Industrial Development Corporation. Therefore, this deliberate move by the government is meant to ensure that all the operations of the MIF remain unknown to the public thereby creating a fecund environment for large-scale looting. Thus, one remains with the question

"What is the motivation, or incentives for excluding entities under MIF from tender processes?".

Climate Change

Furthermore, the government is making efforts to address climate change although there are grey areas that still need to be addressed. The government's policy on Carbon Credit Trading is explicitly stated in SI 158 of 2023 Carbon Credits Trading (General) (Amendment) Regulations, 2023 (No. 1). The Regulations' main goal is to set up procedures for the management and control of carbon credit trading schemes in Zimbabwe. They are designed to give the essential legislative foundation for ensuring sustainable development and to consider the nation's commitment to international efforts to cut or eliminate greenhouse gas emissions from the environment. Nevertheless, there are different sentiments about carbon trading credits as some believe that:

They entrench inequalities and injustices. Carbon trading may lead to

injustices and inequities between various societal groups, including the wealthy and the poor, industrialized and developing nations, as well as the current and following generations.

Their Ineffectiveness: Since it depends on a number of variables, including the market's design, the availability and accuracy of data, the enforcement of regulations, and the participation of actors, carbon trading may not be successful in attaining the intended amount of emission reductions.

They have human security implications: Carbon trading credits have inimical and malevolent effects on human security as facilitate side effects on other environmental and social issues, such as biodiversity loss, human rights violations, and local pollution

Therefore, with the above submission in mind, the government's policy towards carbon credits shows that it was not carefully formulated as it neglects the welfare of the citizens. Thus, despite the subject being technical, the government must undertake massive consultative forums and public hearings to gather citizens' opinions and aspirations. This is essential in generating great public participation and citizen-by-in.

Child Justice

The government's policy about the protection of children when arrested was highlighted in the Child Justice Bill. The bill seeks to protect children's rights when they get arrested by the police. It outlines the steps that must be taken from the time a child is arrested to the time he or she is tried in a court of law and finally convicted. The Bill intends to protect children by ensuring that they are not put in the same cells as hardcore criminals. Thus, the policy strives to address the provision of legal representation for child offenders, establish Child Justice Courts, and propose sentences to be imposed on children and what happens when a child is arrested. It also provides for separate prisons for the detention of child offenders and adult offenders.

Electricity Amendment Bill

Government is making incremental paradigmatic shift in its policy concerning Electricity. This is visible through the Electricity Amendment Bill which seeks to amend Section 60H of the Electricity Act. The bill motivated by the light sentences that are being imposed on some people who are convicted of crimes under the Act. The bill provides for tougher penalties for people who are involved in the transportation of materials used in transmission, generation, distribution, or supply of electricity. It also provides for firmer penalties on people who connect electricity to their households without the

approval of relevant authorities. The law currently provides for a fine as a penalty. A lot of people have been getting away with it. The bill calls for a minimum sentence of ten years in prison. This is a welcome development in curbing electrical leakages, nonetheless, the current electricity supply trends defeat the entire purpose as Zimbabwe is struggling to optimally supply electricity. Since September 2023, load shedding has been going on for more than 10 hours and in some suburbs 12 hours.

Neglected Policies/ Policy Inertia

Although the term neglected policies might be controversial, it is

critical to note that. contextualized meaning of this term is derived from the fact that, little effort has been made in trying to realise the intent of policy objectives. This can be evidenced by Devolution Decentralization Policy, National Disability Policy, National Gender Policy and National Youth Policy to mention but a few. While the policies were carefully crafted with people at the core, the government has not optimally implemented the policies or shown an appetite for the same. Thus, policy inertia is at the core of policies that do not give government expediency.



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Mineral Resource in Southern Africa: A Panacea to Social Service Delivery in the Region?

Southern Africa is home to a wealth of natural resources, including minerals, forests, water, and wildlife which play a vital role in the region's economy and environment. Of particular interest is the vastness of mineral wealth that the region boasts of. Southern Africa boasts the world's largest resources of platinum, gold, copper, titanium, iron, manganese, silver and diamonds. According to rankings based on the Kimberly Process statistics (2022)² on global diamond production Botswana, South Africa, Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Lesotho are ranked among the top 10 world producers of the precious mineral. Angola is ranked 17th on the list of top oil producers in the world with Mozambique boasting of impressive natural gas reserves which have become a source of conflict for the nation. In layman's terms, the existence of these minerals in these countries and many other southern Africa ought to directly translate into ability by these and other nations to provide improved social service delivery. However, this has not been the case for most of the countries occupying the southern hemisphere of this continent we call Africa.

To begin with social service woes in the Southern African region are a complex and multifaceted issue, affecting various sectors, including education, healthcare, infrastructure, and public utilities. For starters Zimbabwe continues to struggle with challenges that hinder the provision of quality and accessible services to its citizens. The education sector in Zimbabwe faces several challenges, including under-funding with an education budget that remains inadequate for the growing population. Many schools for the land-locked nation are faced with a lack of basic infrastructure, such as classrooms, libraries, and sanitation facilities which hinders a quality learning environment and impacts attendance and pass rates. The healthcare system in Zimbabwe has also not fared any better with under resourced hospitals which lack essential equipment, medicines, and staff following the mass exodus of health care workers in pursuit of greener pastures abroad.

https://en.sputniknews.africa/20231022/top-10-diamond-producing-nations-in-the-world-1062997801.html

Despite its progress in social service provision since the apartheid era, South Africa still faces challenges in ensuring equitable access to quality services for all its citizens. This has been evidenced by the widespread service delivery protests that continued to rock the nation in 2023 in mostly highly populated areas. Some of the protests were a direct response to the increased number of blackouts as a result of Eskom's power cuts as well as water outages as a result of the load-shedding schedule. South Africa experienced its highest levels of load shedding in 2023 which resulted in eight-to-12-hour daily electricity cuts leaving residents vulnerable to recurring water shortages, as water pumps could not effectively operate during load shedding.



The investigation revealed how billions of dollars worth of gold were smuggled out of Zimbabwe to Dubai, allowing criminals to dean dirty money through a web of shelf companies...

Lesotho is home to several diamond mines, which are operated by several international companies. These mines are known for producing high-quality diamonds, and the country is considered to be one of the most important diamond-producing countries in Africa housing some of the biggest diamond finds in the world.3 This has not spared the nation from battling with a high unemployment rate and a health sector that has been burdened by disease, especially HIV/ AIDS and tuberculosis (TB). Further upwards, mining in Tanzania includes metals (gold, iron ore, nickel, copper, cobalt, silver), industrial minerals (diamonds, tanzanite and ruby among others), and fuel minerals (coal, uranium). However, the country has a growing number of urban dwellers living in informal settlements with inadequate social services- clean water and ablution facilities. These are but a few examples that demonstrate that the existence of vast mineral wealth in the southern hemisphere has not necessarily translated into better social service delivery for most of the citizens of the SADC nations.

There are a number of challenges to mineral resource governance in the region. Corruption is a major cancer in many Southern African countries often leading to the misallocation of resources and the enrichment of a small number of people at the expense of the majority poor. The Gold Mafia investigation by the Al Jazeera news network in Zimbabwe has demonstrated this very well. The investigation revealed how billions of dollars worth of gold were smuggled out of Zimbabwe to Dubai, allowing criminals to clean dirty money through a web of shelf companies robbing millions of Zimbabweans of their future while a few politically linked individuals benefitted.

According to corruption rankings, the bottom three countries in the region are Mozambique at number 142, Zimbabwe at 157 and the Democratic Republic of Congo at 166 out of the 180 countries as ranked by the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index. Secondly, many governments in Southern Africa are not transparent or accountable in their management of mineral resources. This can lead to the exploitation of resources and the erosion of public trust. These problems have been coupled by the existence of weak institutions that are not able to effectively manage natural resources leading to the unsustainable use of mineral resources and the degradation of the environment through mining activities.

During the SADC People's Summit (held from the $16^{th} - 18^{th}$ of August in Luanda, Angola) several submissions on what the SADC leaders should prioritise were made through the Summit Declaration. The submissions on natural resource governance formed a part of the People's Declaration and they read as follows:

NATURAL RESOURCE GOVERNANCE

Noting that numerous communities that serve as hosts to mining operations continue to undergo various forms of human rights violations, with their grievances largely ignored and unaddressed. The just energy transition could be just by placing people and the planet at the centre. This would only happen through meaningful consultation, participation, and inclusion of marginalized and vulnerable communities. Communities should reclaim their power and dismantle the capitalist model of mining that undermines their voices and agency.

There is a need for a regional industrial policy that includes mineral beneficiation and regional clustering to promote investment, trade, and free movement of people among member states. In other words, we should not export our mineral resources out of the continent and 'repurchase them at a higher price.

Child labour and exploitation must stop, and

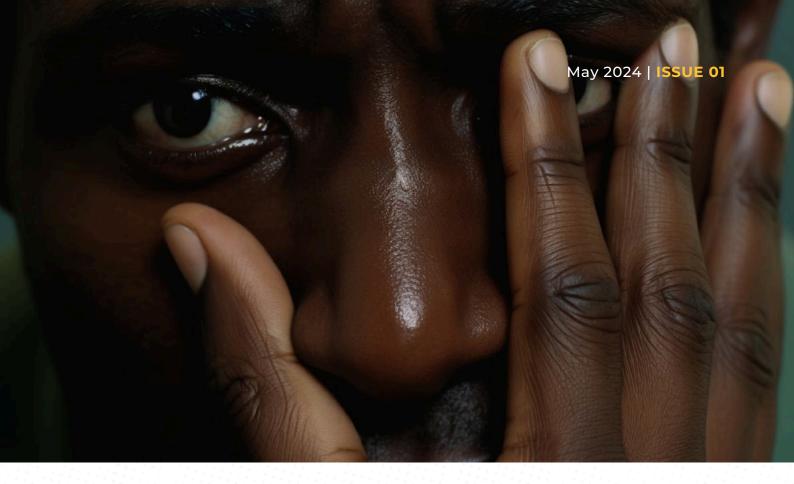
revenue from transition minerals should be channelled towards sustainable social policies to support children from indigent households to access subsidized education.

Transparent tax regimes should be promoted to curb corruption, tax evasion and inequalities within and among nations.

It is high time that political leaders in southern Africa prioritise the welfare of their people over profiteering. Below are some of the recommendations that southern governments should consider as part of their efforts to strengthen the link between natural resource governance and social service provision:

There is need to promote transparency and accountability in natural resource management to ensure that revenues are used effectively for social development and not for self-aggrandizement by a few elites and politically connected individuals. There is also need to foster inclusive and participatory decisionmaking processes involving local communities, indigenous groups, and civil society organizations. Governments should not act for the people without the people going forward. It is also important that SADC governments conduct thorough environmental and social impact assessments to identify and mitigate potential negative impacts of resource development on communities and the environment. This is especially important for the provision of clean portable water where in some instances governments have allowed water sources to be polluted by mining companies at the expense of human and animal life. Lastly, governments should lead in the process of establishing equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms. There is need to develop mechanisms for sharing the benefits of natural resource management equitably among different stakeholders, including marginalized groups. Mining companies should plough back into the critical social service sectors including education, health and infrastructure development. Southern Africa should be at the apex of social development supported by its vast mineral wealth. Our minerals should benefit US the People!!





Unraveling the Nexus: Public Finance Management, Poor Financial Oversight, and Impact on Gender-Based Violence in Zimbabwe.

BY: Believe Marufu

As the world rallies together during the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, it becomes crucial to delve into the intricate web connecting economic factors, public finance management, and the alarming rise of gender-based violence (GBV) in communities. This article sheds light on the repercussions of poor public finance management and mounting debt burdens on Zimbabwean communities, exploring the distressing link between inadequate service delivery, particularly in the context of women's well-being.

Zimbabwe, like many nations, grapples with challenges in public finance management. Misallocation of funds, corruption, and inefficient financial systems contribute to economic instability. Such mismanagement, however, extends beyond fiscal woes; it seeps into the very fabric of society, affecting vulnerable populations disproportionately.

In communities with poor financial oversight, basic services suffer, creating an environment where marginalized individuals, particularly women, face heightened vulnerability. Scarce resources and limited access to essential services amplify existing gender inequalities, laying the groundwork for the emergence of gender-based violence.

Yeukai Chogurwei, a women's rights advocate, emphasized,

"Inadequate allocation of funds for critical services, including healthcare and education, leaves women more susceptible to violence. The link between budgetary decisions and the safety of women is undeniable."

Zimbabwe's mounting debt burden not only strains the national economy but also exacerbates social disparities. As the weight of debt intensifies, the government may resort to austerity measures, often impacting social services. Education, healthcare, and support systems for victims of gender-based violence face severe cutbacks, leaving women in precarious situations with fewer avenues for assistance and protection.

"In communities where services are lacking, women are left without adequate recourse when facing violence. This perpetuates a cycle of abuse and impunity,"

The cycle of debt-induced austerity directly correlates with an increase in gender-based violence incidents. Limited resources, coupled with a strained support infrastructure, create an environment where women are more susceptible to abuse and exploitation.

Chogurwei further comments, "Excessive debt not only burdens the nation but also contributes to a cycle of poverty, making women and vulnerable groups more susceptible to various forms of violence."

In communities where basic services are inadequately delivered, women often bear the brunt of the repercussions. Insufficient healthcare facilities, a lack of accessible education, and

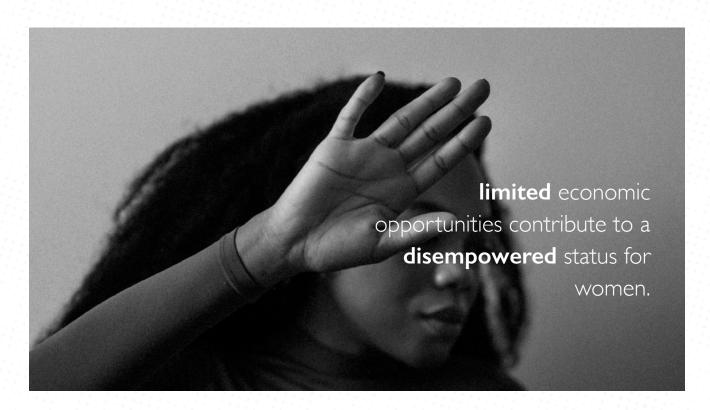
limited economic opportunities contribute to a disempowered status for women. This vulnerability, in turn, becomes a breeding ground for gender-based violence. Limited access to justice and support services further compounds the challenges.

"In communities where services are lacking, women are left without adequate recourse when facing violence. This perpetuates a cycle of abuse and impunity," states Chogurwei.

As we advocate for the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, it is crucial to recognize the interconnectedness of economic factors and the prevalence of GBV. In Zimbabwe, addressing public finance

mismanagement, reducing the burden of debt, and improving service delivery are imperative steps towards creating a safer environment for all.

The words of Yeukai Chogurwei echo the sentiments of many advocates: "Effective governance, transparent financial management, and prioritizing social services are not just economic principles; they are essential components in the fight against gender-based violence. The 16 days of activism should catalyze change, inspiring us to address the root causes that against perpetuate violence women in our communities.





Trees are an important aspect of climate change mitigation strategies as they absorb carbon dioxide from human activities. The tree planting initiative has been necessitated by the devastating effects of climate change in communities that has brought more poverty for women and youths with it and the need to formulate credible and sustainable economic and social alternatives in the face of climate change. ZIMCODD has always mentioned that it is a people-driven initiative and as such, the tree planting initiative was formulated by women and youths in Gokwe and has now spread to areas like Goromonzi, Checheche and Matobo. SEJAs from both Matobo and Gokwe seem to have understood this very well as they have gone on to initiate tree-planting initiatives in their respective communities. SEJAs in Matobo have planted 102 trees in their community thus far. Gokwe, which has been at the forefront of leading the initiative have exceeded all expectations and planted to date 900 000 Mutsagu trees, 85000 lemon trees, 60000 Albizia trees, 75000 Lukina trees, 300 Musekese trees.

As a strategy to encourage women and youths to grow trees, it is mainly fruiting trees that are being planted with the hope that women and youths will benefit from the fruits in the future both as food supplements but also credible business materials. SEJA's also leveraged the cultural beliefs of the society where fruit trees cannot be cut down and be used for firewood. This eliminates deforestation. The trees are set to be a part of a plan to develop a nursery in Matobo that will become a hub where trees are grown and sold but also a platform where economic governance conversations are facilitated.

FROM THE SEJA CORNER

They Borrow, I pay

Why Borrow For Me, If I cannot Have It?

Why Take On My Behalf, If I cannot Have It?

Why Call Me Beneficiary, If I donot Benefit?

Who Has Benefited From ESAP?

Who Has Benefited From Command

Agriculture?

Who Has Benefited From RBZ Debt

Assumption?

Zisco Steel Debt Assumption?

Who Has Benefited From All That I Am

Owing?



By Gracia Mashingaidze (ZIMCODD Youth SEJA)



Inequality In Service delivery

BY: Nichollate N Ndlovu

Inequality in service delivery is the unequal distribution of resources, opportunities and access to essential services such as healthcare, education and infrastructure. Access to service delivery is a human right that needs to be fulfilled always. Inequality in service is a crime against human life. Inequality in service delivery leads to human insecurity. People would be affected physically, mentally and emotionally. The rights of the people would be infringed. For too long the people of Matabeleland South province; Matobo District have been excluded in terms of service delivery. Little has been given to them. Inequality in service delivery has exacerbated a lot of challenges within the region that range from drugs and substance abuse to teenage pregnancies and child marriages.

The people from Matobo District have limited access to healthcare facilities with most residents having to travel long distances to receive basic medication. According to the Matobo District strategic plan 2021-2025, under the section Client Needs and Analysis; there are only 14 wards which have clinics. This means about 56% of the population have got access to a basic health care system which is not even enough hence compromising the right of the people to access basic health care. Inequality in service delivery is further compounded by the poor education system in the region.

Matobo district has got few schools which are characterized by long distances, few resources and

lack of good infrastructure. According to Matobo DDC, 204 learners have dropped out of school which is an alarming number. Distances of schools have made them drop out of school because schools are far away and one cannot walk daily and due to poverty, they can't attend the nearby boarding schools.

Inequality in service delivery is further compounded by poor infrastructure. The area has been characterized by poor and old infrastructure, and poor road networks which hinder access to health and education services. Addressing these issues of inequality needs collective measures from the government and civil society to promote equitable investments in the region and improve the lives of the residents.

The residents of Matobo district have asserted that corruption and nepotism have contributed to the region's unequal service delivery. They believe the area has been politically marginalized thus why service delivery is so poor. Despite all these, there is hope for a better future. Collective efforts are needed to make sure that everyone has access to service delivery despite of geographical location. The power of collective action is undeniable and it's through concerted efforts that we break the barriers of inequality and build a more just society where there is equity.



Woodlands Park, Gweru's Dumpsite

BY: Tonderai Machimbira

The community of Woodlands Park in Zimbabwe's Midlands province is facing a dire situation as they are located next to a dumpsite that poses a serious threat to their health and well-being. The dumpsite not only brings in heaps of trash that attracts pests and poses a hygiene risk but also releases toxic fumes when the trash is burnt, which affects the air quality in the residential area.

The impact of living next to a dump site on the livelihoods of the people of Woodlands Park is significant and far-reaching. Firstly, the health of the residents is at risk as they are constantly exposed to harmful chemicals and pollutants from the burning trash. This can lead to various respiratory illnesses, skin conditions, and other health problems, especially for vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly.

Secondly, the environmental impact of the dumpsite on the community is also a cause for concern. The pollution from the burning trash can contaminate the soil, water sources, and air, affecting not only the immediate surroundings but also the broader ecosystem. This can have long-term consequences for the sustainability of the environment and the health of the residents of Woodlands Park.

Furthermore, the presence of a dumpsite near residential areas can also have social and economic implications for the community. The foul smell and unsightly appearance of the dumpsite can decrease property values and deter potential investors or businesses from operating in the area. This can lead to decreased economic opportunities for the residents and hinder the overall development of the community.

In conclusion, the impact of living next to a dump site on the livelihoods of the people of Woodlands Park is grave and multifaceted. It poses a serious threat to their health, the environment, and their socio-economic well-being. Immediate action must be taken to address this situation and protect the rights and well-being of the residents of Woodlands Park.

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