



STATEMENT ON EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS DEMANDING FOREIGN CURRENCY FOR FEES PAYMENT.

The Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCodd); Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU) and Female Students Network Trust (FSNT) note with concern that some tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe have been demanding student fees and accommodation to be paid exclusively in USD, despite the law requiring payments in both the local currency (at the prevailing bank rate) and foreign currency.¹ In August 2023, the government through the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education gave Universities and Colleges a green light to peg tuition fees in USD currencies.² We are concerned that this is a concrete violation of the Exchange Control Act Chapter 22:05 of the Finance Act which still recognizes the Zimbabwean Dollar as an official legal tender.³

- We have observed that tertiary institutions such as Bulawayo Polytechnic, Great Zimbabwe University, Harare Polytechnic, National University of Science and Technology (NUST) and Midlands State University (MSU) are demanding a portion of their fees in foreign currency, a policy that is against the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development which allows the use of local currency payable at the prevailing interbank rate.
- We further note with great concern, the violation of students' rights at Belvedere Technical Teachers College, where some students were denied accommodation and informed that it was only available for those who paid fees in USD. Furthermore, the students were told by the Dean to top up a fee of US\$233 as the fees they paid is no longer sufficient. Subsequently, those who failed to provide the required top up were made to sleep on the floor in the common rooms. At Midlands State University, students who chose to settle the balance of their fees in local currency were asked to pay an additional 10% of the amount settled in local currency.
- We acknowledge and fully commend the government's directive⁴ regarding school fees and levies which censured institutions that have been flaunting laid down school governance procedures. To this end, we condemn the deliberate undermining of Public Finance Management laws and policies by institutions of higher learning. We condemn the practice of foreign currency prioritization over the local currency which has created a financial burden for students and parents who are unemployed or earning in the depreciating ZWL. This unwelcome practice by such tertiary institutions continues to widen the inequality gap between the rich and poor thereby disenfranchising the marginalized and vulnerable students of their right to education.
- We are fully aware that Education is a right! It should never be commodified as envisaged in sections 27 and 75 of the constitution. As concerned citizens, representatives of the people and students, driven by the desire for social and economic justice, we call upon:

1. All institutions to take heed of the Ministerial directive (respect the multicurrency system and allow payment of fees in ZWL at the prevailing interbank rate) and comply with the country's fiscal policies.
2. Treasury, the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education and related regulatory bodies must ensure that tertiary institutions are in full compliance of the fiscal policies of the land. There must be clearly laid down consequences for institutions that fail to comply.
3. Tertiary institutions to develop and implement a transparent and accountable fee structure that is accessible to students and parents to foster a collaborative and supportive learning environment for students.
4. Treasury to increase budget allocation towards the education sector to ensure inclusive education for all.

1. <https://www.zimeye.net/2023/08/20/universities-granted-permission-to-charge-usd/>

2. <https://shorturl.at/bMT34>

3. FINANCE ACT, 2023

4. <https://www.herald.co.zw/education-minister-reads-riot-act-on-errant-schools/>