

# PUBLIC RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

## SITUATIONAL REPORT



Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development

**2021 PUBLICATION**

# Introduction

In order to build citizen agency in public resource monitoring and to promote citizen participation, the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) set up Community Monitoring Agents (CORAs) in districts across Zimbabwe's 10 provinces. 59 CORAs in different districts have been capacitated to monitor and document the abuse of public resources at district level and report back to ZIMCODD on a monthly basis. This report presents an overview of public resource management at local level as reported by the 59 CORAs. The report also documents some of the stories of human interest produced by CORAs in the month of April 2021.



## Operating Macro-economic Context

The month of April saw the annual inflation rate dropping from 240.1% to 194% with the month-on-month inflation decreasing from 2.25% to 1.58%. This was attributed to the deflationary strategies being employed by the central bank in its quest to stabilise inflation and restore sanity in the economy.

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) expressed its intention to maintain the strategy targeting a year end of less than 55% year-on-year inflation. On the foreign currency market, the exchange rate has maintained its stability with less impactful oscillations on the cents which does not change the round figure of US\$ 1 as to ZWL 84.

Attempts to reinforce the recovery gains in the economy and overcome some of the COVID-19 pandemic's harmful and malignant effects were seen by a strategic approval of the ZWL\$ 500 million loan for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) which the MSMEs will access from microfinance institutions and banks at 30% per annum so as to enhance productivity and production in all sectors of the economy that sustain the

livelihoods of the Zimbabwean population.

The month of April also saw the central bank expressing strongly its position to support the bureau de change with all necessary requirements to promote smooth operations broadening their support to MSMEs. Local banks also lobbied and advocated for stability and predictability in the policy ecology. The government was also urged to desist from making policies without consulting key stakeholders.

The macroeconomic environment was marked by the official opening of Kazungula Bridge which will see a deviation of business from Zimbabwe to the rest of Africa via Botswana and Zambia. It is a threat to the Zimbabwe's long enjoyed status of being the hub and gateway of SADC to the rest of Africa. Illicit financial flows have also reached alarming levels with the recent gold smuggling which saw 23kg of Zimbabwean gold worth 780 000 being intercepted at OR Tambo Airport.

# 3

## Public Resource Monitoring and Citizen Agency

Driven by the growing corruption, resource leakages, abuses and mismanagement of public resources let-alone COVID-19 earmarked resources and the flouting of procurement procedures by public officials, ZIMCODD engaged on this intervention to influence and promote efficient deployment and use of public resources starting from the district level.

The motivation also stem from the lack of transparency and accountability on COVID-19 resource mobilisation, allocation and expenditure and the aim is to influence citizen recourse against the apparent abuse of public resources. The initiative seeks to contribute to two main objectives which are:

- i) To build citizen agency in public resource monitoring and in particular, COVID-19 resources.
- ii) To promote participation in economic governance at the local level.

# 4

## Methodology

The Community Resource Monitors (CORAs) track and monitor the use of public funds in their districts on a monthly basis by completing a monitoring framework that was developed by ZIMCODD.

The CORAs closely follow the mobilization, allocation, distribution and usage of COVID-19 earmarked resources. They also gather and share stories of human interest within their respective districts. The aim is to identify leakages and bottlenecks in the flow of financial resources, to flag the abuse and mismanagement of public resources and also to document and report on good practices for replication in other districts.

Data gathered from the monitoring framework or survey questionnaires is analyzed quantitatively using Excel and presented as a summary. The situational report is qualitatively informed by human interest stories drawn from all districts.

# **Public Resources and the General State of Public Service Delivery in Zimbabwe**

Public Resources Management is at the core of national growth and development. As such, a country with good public resources management tend to have competitive advantage over a country with poor public resources management. It follows that a country which manages its public resources prudently has effective public service delivery as compared to one with a bad public governance.

For Zimbabwe, service delivery has been tremendously declining while public officials continue to siphon public resources. The ZINARA scandal points to the level of corruption and impunity in the public sector with clear disregard of service provision . ZINARA` finance manager had no qualification to head the institution's finance except for a theology diploma. A clear indication to factors which are militating against organisational capacity and for robust service delivery.

On the other hand, the nature of service delivery in most districts in the country has been dilapidating with refuse collection being done once or twice a month or not at all, with water shortages and sewer burst threatening public health. In Victoria Falls, the Town Clerk was arrested on allegations of corruption, bribery and abuse of office by ZACC while in Chiredzi, the Town Engineer and Town Planner were arrested on allegations of corruption and abuse of Office which undermined service delivery. They were however acquitted by the regional magistrate despite the fact that they deprived the communities of resources which were supposed to be used for the betterment of service delivery.

Furthermore, it is imperative to note that, one cannot discuss service delivery and not talk of the health sector especially in a context where the country is fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. While there are many anomalies to discuss in the health sector ranging from corruption, bribery, nepotism, political interference to mention but a few, It is imperative to acknowledge the credit given to the country by the World Health Organisation in managing the pandemic and vaccination. Zimbabwe was ranked 7th in Africa for managing the pandemic through vaccinations. At the same time efforts should be made by the government to revamp the health sector which is in a dire situation as evidenced by dilapidating equipment at central hospitals and their inability to handle some cases which are then referred to mission hospitals such as Karanda mission hospital.

Public transport has become problematic with the government strengthening its iron grip on the transport sector as a way of exacting its monopoly and putting a leash on other players which it accuses of sabotage and furthering the agenda of opposition party through hiking transport fees. In as much as the ban of private players has culminated in the decrease in transport prices it is critical to note that it has also led to transport shortages and challenges. It also impedes upon efforts to manage the pandemic as there will be no social distancing at ZUPCO bus pick-up points or in ZUPCO buses.

# Findings & Discussion

This section presents and discusses the overview of public resource management in various districts based on the findings from the CORA monthly surveys.

## 6.1 Availability of public resources of economic value in your Districts

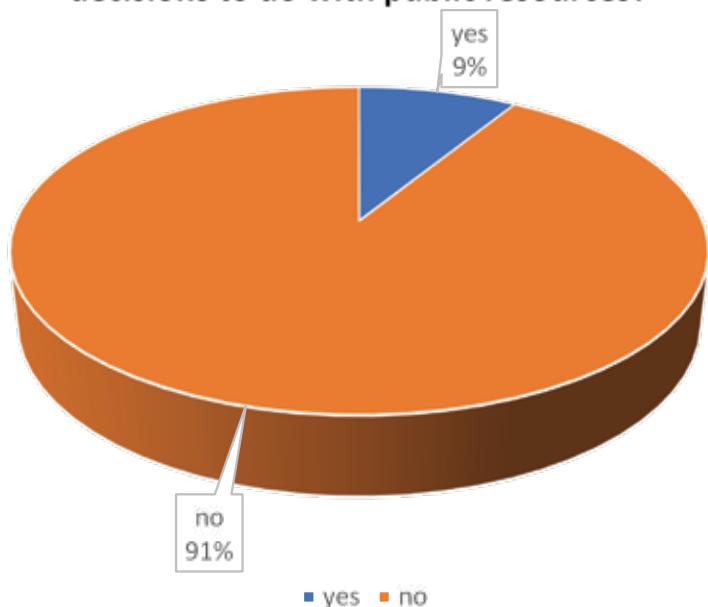
57 CORAs took part in completing the monitoring framework for the month of April. The first question assessed knowledge of the existence of public resources of economic value in the different districts where CORAs are based. 54 out of 57 community resource monitors indicated that they were aware of the existence of public resources while only three were not sure of the existence of public resources of economic value. The table below shows public resources of economic value as identified by CORAs in different districts:

| District       | Public Resource of Economic Value             |
|----------------|---|
| Binga          | Zambezi River; Wildlife; Fish & Kapenta       |
| Bulawayo       | Gold  |
| Chiredzi       | Wildlife; Quartz stone                        |
| Chirumanzu     | Forestry; Water bodies                        |
| Gokwe          | Wildlife                                      |
| Goromonzi      | Gold; Lithium; river sand;                    |
| Gutu           | Gold  |
| Gwanda         | Gold  |
| Gweru          | Limestone                                     |
| Harare central | Land  |
| Hwange         | Coal; Wildlife; Quarry                        |
| Kwekwe         | Gold; Chrome; Iron ore                        |
| Lupane         | Methane gas; timber; Coal                     |
| Masvingo       | Gold; Quarry stone; Land                      |
| Mutare         | Gold; Diamond; timber                         |
| Mutasa         | Gold; timber; water bodies                    |
| Mutoko         | Black granite                                 |
| Victoria Falls | Zambezi River; Natural wonder; Wildlife; Fish |

## 6.2 Citizen Participation in Economic Decisions

This section assessed whether CORAs as residents in their respective districts are regularly consulted by their local authorities on decisions to do with public resources. From the survey, only 9% of the respondents indicated that they are regularly consulted while 91% indicated that they are not consulted on decisions to do with public resources as depicted in the chart below:

Are citizens regularly consulted by authorities on decisions to do with public resources?



Citizen consultation and informed participation in decisions on public resources remain the cornerstone of good public resource management. The picture depicted above is very worrying given the magnitude of corruption and mismanagement of public resources. Factually, the Auditor General's Reports have perennially unearthed systemic grand corruption, abuse and misuse of public resources both at the local and national level, and this calls for a wholesale reform in the way the government conducts its business. Citizens should always be placed at the centre when making decisions on public resources. Stronger safeguards, monitoring and regulation against corruption are urgently needed on the part of the parliament's oversight role.

### 6.3 Are you well informed about the exploitation, management and use of public resources in your community?

For this section, CORAs were monitoring if citizens are well informed about the management of public resources in their communities. 95% of the respondents indicated that citizens are not well informed while only 5% indicated that they are well informed about the exploitation, management and use of public resources in their communities. For the 95% that reported that citizens are not well informed, they lamented how they are deprived of such critical information with only a few who continue to benefit while the majority languish in poverty. On whether benefits of public resources were shared equally and equitably among women, men and youth, all the CORAs (100%) reported that public resources are not equally and equitably distributed in all the districts. Nepotism, politics of affection and corruption have also been cited as influencers in the unequal resource allocation. In some communities, youth and women do not own any land even if they have a pivotal role to play in production. A CORA from

Nyanga district had this to say,

"Nyanga is full of natural resources including minerals such as gold, land, timber plantations as well natural tourist areas. The community is not fully benefiting from these resources due to polarization and politics of patronage only those aligned to the ruling party are the only ones benefiting in Nyanga. For instance, distribution of aid from the department of social welfare or land distribution in the communities is being done on political lines."

## 6.4 How often do authorities share information regards public resources?

On access to information regards public resources, 79% said that authorities never share such information while 21% reported that authorities sometimes share information on public resources. Such information include but not limited to financial audit reports, public procurement, tender notices and contracts. Such a scenario illustrates the lack of transparency and accountability in the management of public resources at local authority level. In an incident reported by a Mutare CORA is illustrative of how local authorities selectively and inconsistently share information about public resources:

During a meeting which was convened by Transparency International Zimbabwe in March 2021, where the Mutare City Council's Finance Director, Mr Chadesuka and Engineer Karenyi claimed that the council used its own resources to the tune of US\$450,000 to procure water pipes from South Africa yet there was evidence that the African Development Bank through the Africa Fund program funded the project and released US\$500,000 to the local authority. The Acting town clerk Mr Mutara claims that US\$300,000 is required to complete the project yet the same council has applied for borrowing powers to borrow US\$500,000.00 in order to complete the project. One then wonders why the council borrowed US\$500,000 for a job that needs US\$300,000. It then became apparent that the city of Mutare has made it a culture to seek money under the guise of improving the water situation but quickly divert it towards other purposes as soon as they receive it.

On the other hand, a meeting organised by the Bulawayo city council to engage citizens on the way forward regarding the review of the Bulawayo City Master Plan document, is testimony to cosmetic as opposed to genuine engagements by local authorities in their quest to share information on public resources. A Bulawayo CORA reported that, "the engagement period was only set for two hours which was less than sufficient to address the issues that the residents had, which included Public Finance Management issues, the state of service delivery in the city and other developmental issues. The city council created the impression

that they were informing rather than engaging as their interactions were minimal, totally ignoring questions and comments that were being made by residents. The copy of the Master Plan document which was to be reviewed was also shared less than two hours before the meeting, yet it was a 30-page document, clearly people were not given ample-time to read and make informed contributions, thereby defeating the whole purpose of citizen engagement."

## 6.5 Provision of clean and safe water

Water woes have become a crosscutting issue spread across all the provinces as 45 districts (79%) of the 57 districts sampled reported water challenges while only 12 districts (21%) said they are receiving clean and safe water as illustrated below:



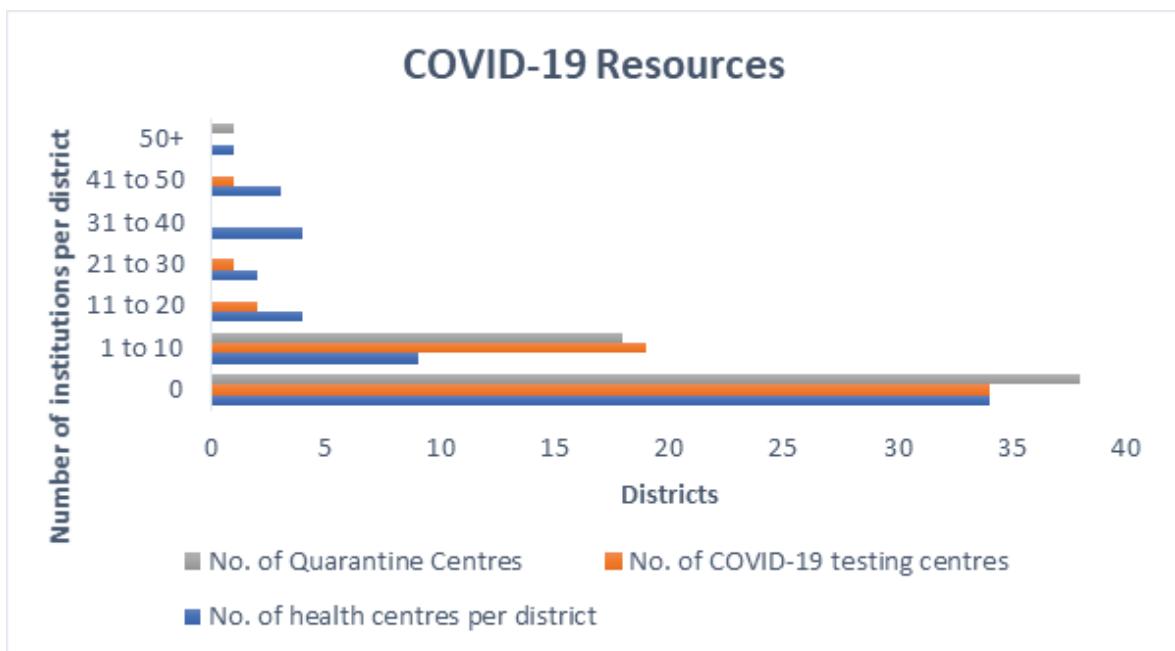
These water woes are a genesis to other social evils such as sexual abuse of women and children as they search for water, death of infants as they fall into open water sources, water borne diseases and contravenes the World Health Guidelines on hand and general hygiene which threatens further spread of corona virus infections. The 21% which reported that local authorities are supplying clean and safe water are Hwange, Bubi, Victoria Falls, Beitbridge, Lupane, Chirumhanzu, Gokwe, Binga, Mutasa, Chiredzi, Kwekwe and Goromonzi. Clearly, the government through local authorities has largely abrogated its constitutional mandate codified in section 77 (a) to provide clean, safe and portable water. It came to the fore that some residents of Dangamvura area 3 in Mutare, for example, have been failing to get water from their taps for the past 23 years, while in Cowdray Park for over 10 years and over 4 years for Shackleton area in Chinhoyi. In Gimboki area, Mutare greedy people have monopolized some of the open water sources and are demanding payment from vulnerable women and children as they seek to fetch water.

## 6.6 Accessibility to Devolution Funds & Local Authority Budgets Information

Access to information on devolution funds and local authority budgets seem to be a preserve of a few.

Across all the districts sampled, only 2 districts (Hwange and Masvingo) reported to have access to local authority budgets while in 55 districts local authority budgets were not easily accessible. Three districts (namely Beitbridge, Gweru and Hwange) reported accessing information on devolution funds while 54 districts reported lack of access to the same. While social accountability is based on the idea that citizens are essential partners in governance, as their participation ensures the responsiveness, transparency and accountability in the use of public resources, citizens should be at the centre of determining how public funds should be used. This can only happen when citizens fully participate in budget processes and are meaningfully involved in the whole budget cycle at both local and national level.

## 6.7 COVID-19 Resources

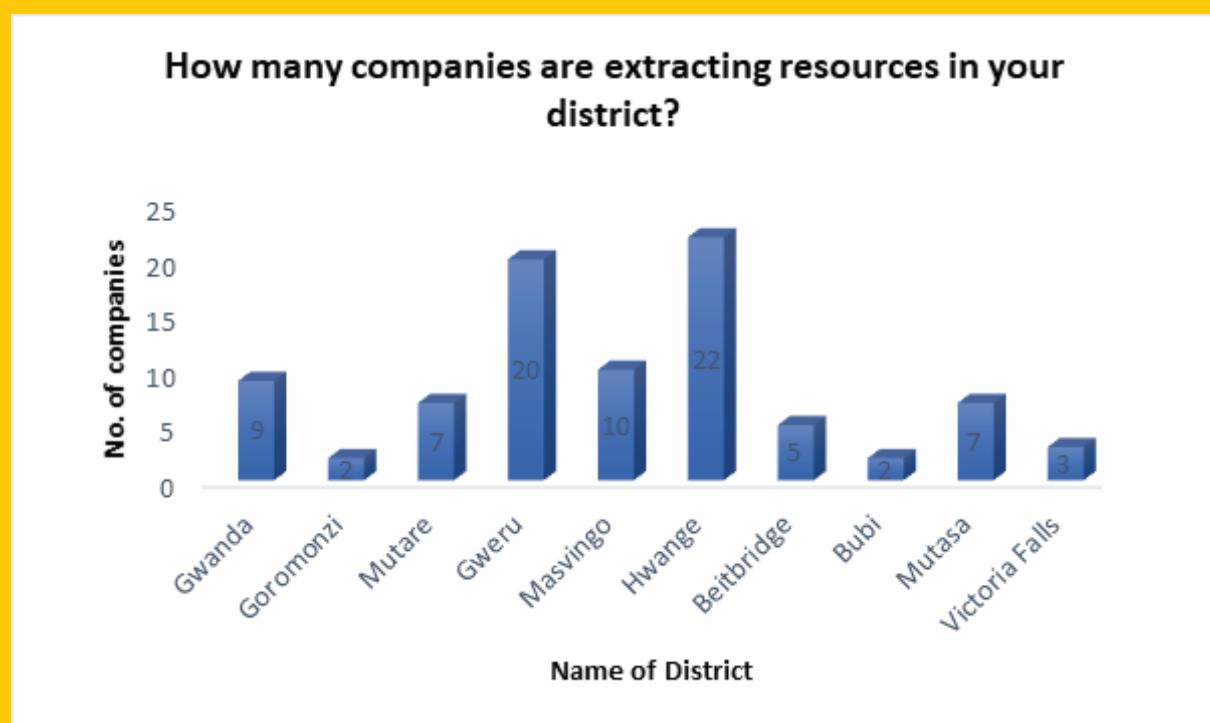


This variable sought to find out the number of health institutions per district and of those how many are providing access to COVID-19 tests and to find out how many quarantine centers were there in each district. The graph above shows that the number of health institutions per district, number of COVID-19 centers and number of quarantine centers in each district was mostly concentrated within the 1 to 10 range. From the graph, 9 districts reported to have between 1 to 10 health institutions per district while 19 districts reported to have between 1 to 10 health institutions offering COVID-19 testing services and 18 districts reporting to have between 1 and 10 quarantine centers per district. 4 districts reported to have between 11 and

20 health centers and 2 districts reported to have between 21 and 30 health centers. Two (2) districts reported to have between 11 and 20 COVID-19 testing centers and 1 district reporting between 21 and 30 COVID-19 testing centers. In the extreme cases, 3 districts (Mutasa, Hwange and Victoria Falls) reported presence of between 41 and 50 health centers per district with 1 district (Gokwe) reporting to have over 50 health centers. Victoria Falls has between 41 and 50 COVID-19 testing centers while Harare reported to have over 50 quarantine centers. Zero (0) in the graph above does not necessarily mean the absence of health institutions but also lack of information from the resource monitors. All the 19 districts which reported the presence of COVID-19 testing centers also reported the receipt of PPEs from the government. The graph illustrates that Zimbabwe has the basic infrastructure to respond to COVID-19 despite the lack of fiscal transparency and accountability in COVID-19 resource expenditure. Therefore, transparent, accountable and prudent use of COVID-19 resources remain central to the success of the Zimbabwe's response to the global pandemic.

## 6.8 Natural resource extraction

CORAs from resource rich communities demonstrated that indeed there are companies which are extracting resources in their communities. The highest number of companies was recorded in Hwange (22) followed by Gweru with 20 companies while the rest are 10 and below:



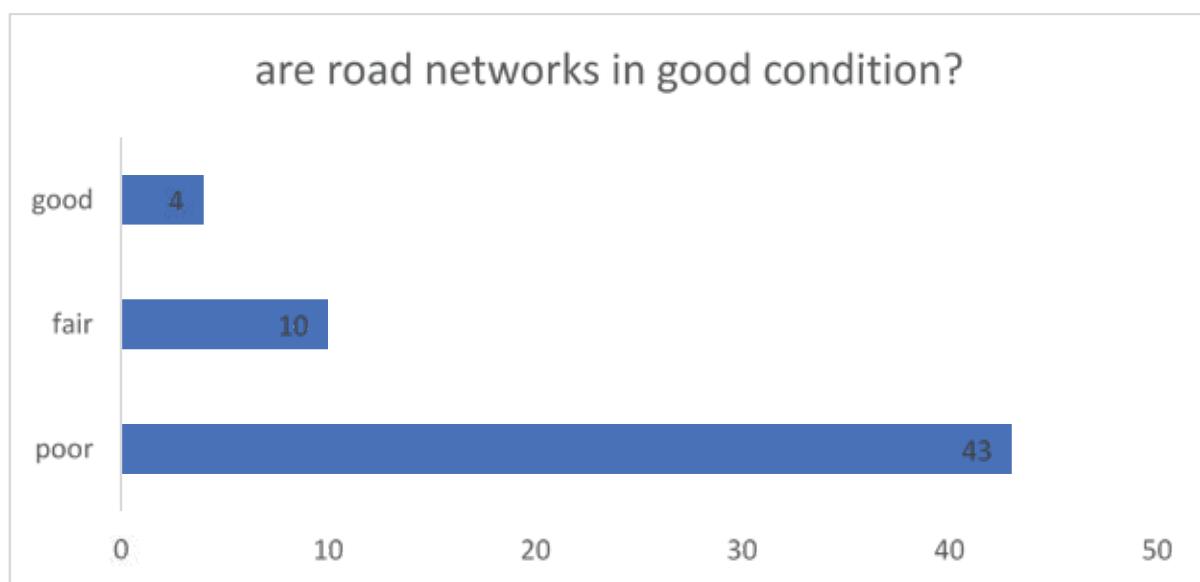
A glaring gap observed was on the lack of knowledge on what the companies are paying as taxes and levies to local authorities as 1 (Gwanda) out of the 10 districts above indicated that Blanket Mine discloses how much they pay as taxes/levies. Blanket Mine also donated ZWL\$16 million in 2020 and they continue to donate ZWL\$5 million on a weekly basis to

complement government efforts and response to COVID-19. These donations are channeled via the Chamber of mines. The case with the other 9 districts is attributable to the rampant corruption and lack of transparency from both the companies and the local authorities. In responding to how much companies plough back as corporate social responsibility, there was lack of clarity however the initiatives in the table below are an indication of what the companies are doing as corporate social responsibility in the communities they are extracting resources:

| <b>District</b>       | <b>Corporate Social Responsibility Initiative/s</b>  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Lupane</b>         | None   |
| <b>Hwange</b>         | Local Mining companies have been building school blocks, drilling of boreholes and education costs for excelling learners. The companies have also been providing handouts to traditional leaders, donating an ambulance to local health clinics and sponsoring soccer and netball teams.  |
| <b>Beitbridge</b>     | Donations are made during state functions.   |
| <b>Gweru</b>          | Companies such as the Chinese Mining and Mineral Processing Companies have complemented government interventions such as the response to the Cyclone Idai and COVID-19. SINO Zimbabwe has donated cement and bricks towards the construction of school infrastructure in Vungu Rural District. The companies have also been supporting the Mayor's Cheer Fund.             |
| <b>Mutare</b>         | Few companies such as Tanganda sponsor an annual marathon while Border Timbers and Wattle company sponsor social soccer.   |
| <b>Gwanda</b>         | Blanket Mine has been instrumental in notable projects such as the Phakama Clinic Isolation Blocks constructed at the clinic, and the provision of PPEs to the mine workers and their families. On the other hand, Pretoria Portland Cement which is located at Colleen Bawn donated quarry stones to Mabheka Primary School for the construction of a block of classroom. |
| <b>Victoria Falls</b> | Shearwater and Wild Horizon pay school fees for urban and rural based learners and also provides stationery. In urban areas, they pay school fees for learners at Chamabondo Primary School  |

## 6.9 Community rating on road networks

Through Statutory Instrument 47 of 2021 {Civil Protection (Declaration of State of Disaster: Rural and Urban Areas of Zimbabwe) (Road Infrastructure Network) Notice, 2021}, the President declared Zimbabwean roads – rural and urban a state of national disaster. This section required CORAs to rate their communities in terms of the condition of road networks in their districts and the general consensus was that Zimbabwean roads are in a poor state as depicted in the graph below by 43 respondents while 10 respondents reported that roads were in a fair condition and only 4 respondents reporting that roads were good:



The graph above confirms that Zimbabwean roads are indeed in a bad state. The recent damning ZINARA revelations bear witness to the state of national roads in the country, most of which have become death traps as ZINARA management and staff corruptly abused their offices and cost ZINARA and the country millions of dollars. Important to note is that a good infrastructure and transport system contributes immensely to enhancing access to education, health, trade and other socioeconomic developments in the country. The status quo therefore calls for an urgent need for the government to deliberately invest in road and infrastructural development across the country.

## 7. Citizen Agency & Oversight in Accountability Monitoring: Milestones

In line with the two main objectives of this initiative, the following are the notable achievements by ZIMCODD's community resource monitors (CORAs):

- There has been an increased appetite for public resources information at the local level as CORAs are increasingly getting into spaces to get information on public resources management. One CORA reported that, it was when she attended a

devolution meeting in Bulawayo where a Bulawayo Member of Parliament disclosed that the City of Bulawayo got ZWL\$41.3 million dollars RTGs allocation for devolution over three years spanning 2019 to 2021. In the same meeting a breakdown of how the \$39million so far expended was provided.

- Increased access to information and zeal to track and monitor public resource usage for public good. A Mutare urban based SEJA remarked, "Mutare District is endowed with natural resources that should be channelled to broaden the city's revenue base and transform the city into a first class destination. However, the lack of proper public finance management systems by duty bearers have spelt the untold suffering of the most vulnerable communities of Mutare, particularly in light of the COVID-19 era. As a social and Economic Justice Ambassador, I will continue to champion the social and economic rights of citizens."
- Citizen agency in the demand for prudent resource management. It was reported that in Victoria Falls residents are up in arms against the local authority over hikes in rates after the municipality effected a 400% increase in water and service charges resulting in residents establishing a social media campaign, under the banner #VicFallsWaterRatesMustFall. The campaign which is running on WhatsApp groups has seen residents, young and old, members of the press and councillors joining the group to engage on ways to petition council to revise the rates. The #VicFallsWaterRatesMustFall has ignited citizen agency to speak out against poor service delivery and hold the city fathers to account. One resident and local businessman was reported to have said this during the campaign, "true representation must remain people oriented; the moment it becomes of pride and stubbornness it loses its substance". In the same vein, residents of Mutasa Rural district wrote a petition to the Chief Executive Officer of the rural district council demanding rates to fall and are awaiting responses.
- CORAs taking a lead in engaging duty bearers and hold council officials to account. CORAs teaming up together with other SEJAs engaged local duty bearers following a case where 120 girls at Bonda High School were diagnosed with COVID-19. The council delegation present which was led by a Mr Danana (the Engineer) assured the residents that council is working around the clock to bring the situation to normalcy.

## **8. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Public resources management is important in the day to day running of the state and is anchored on transparency and accountability. However, public resources management in Zimbabwe is in a bad state as it is marred by the rampant abuse of public resources for private gain, corruption and illicit financial flows. The country's macroeconomic environment has continued to widen the gap between the rich and the poor with the politically and economically connected elites taking advantage of the current fiscal regime. These few elites at the helm of power continue to siphon public resources and live lavish lifestyles financed by the impoverished taxpayers while the poor languish in abject poverty. Resultantly, critical social service institutions like public health centers operate with

obsolete equipment if any, lack of basic medical necessities, low capacity to conduct PCR tests and to purchase COVID-19 vaccines in-spite of a looming third wave and a decaying water and sanitation infrastructure. This report has clearly demonstrated that the government has abrogated its responsibility to prudently utilise available resources to ensure that the human rights of all citizens are respected, promoted and protected as provided for in the supreme constitution.

## Recommendations

### For government and local authorities

- Duty bearers should provide access to equitable and quality services to the communities they serve
- Local authorities must practice sound Public Resources Management and deliberately open up spaces for citizen participation in public resource governance
- Local authorities should fully incorporate the youth and women dividend in local and national economic governance and development in general
- ZACC should step up efforts to effect punitive and deterrent measures against perpetrators of corruption and those found abusing public resources.

### For Citizens

- Citizens should lobby local authorities and participate in economic governance processes at local level. Get into local governance spaces and participate in issues that affect citizens and proffer solutions
- Deepen research skills and be tactful in evidence gathering so as to produce impactful investigative stories.

## **Annex 1: Selected Human Interest Stories**

Below are selected stories of human interest which were shared by the CORAs touching on different aspects of public resource management however, overall depicting bad public resource management at the local authority and central government levels.

### **Growing scepticism around COVID-19 resources: A case of history repeating itself. Victoria Falls, Hwange District**

Zimbabwe marked its first COVID-19 induced lockdown anniversary on 30 March 2021. The past year was characterized by a sharp decline in economic activity, job losses, and economic activity, and, specifically in the beautiful resort city of Victoria Falls, the city quickly turned into a ghost town. A few months into the lockdown the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare through local councillors distributed food hampers to community members. In some parts of the country, the hampers included 2kg Sugar, 2kg Rice, 2litres cooking oil and a 20 litre bucket. However, in Victoria Falls, residents only received rice which was measured using a small kango plate by the distributors. Residents went out in numbers in the different wards to queue for the rice, however some were disappointed as they did not receive anything. According to one Dumile Ncube (not actual name), who has been sick since he stopped working due to the COVID-19 induced lockdown, he struggled to get out of the house to queue for rice which was distributed at Mosi-ao-Tunya High School, in Chinotimba township. "We stood in the long, winding queue being scorched by the sun waiting for our turn to come to receive the rice. However, we saw some Committee members jumping the queue to receive more rice, despite the fact that they had already received earlier on in the morning." Ncube expressed lack of confidence in the Councillor and Social Welfare department. He said while he was disappointed to have not gotten the rice as it ran out before his turn, he expected it. "No matter how good an initiative is, corruption amongst our leaders always affects us in the townships." A total of 38 Victoria Falls residents complained about the corruption and mismanagement of COVID-19 relief funds then, but the local authority continues to take no action on alleged perpetrators. At a recent engagement by the leadership of the Resident Association, the local Council failed to avail information on how much Victoria Falls Municipality (VFM) has budgeted for COVID-19. The residents' association leadership asked the VFM Treasurer if there is a contingent budget for COVID-19 which was included in the budget. However, they did not get any concrete feedback. According to one resident, the VFM has a total disregard of their responsibility as duty bearers to residents who are claim holders. The Victoria Falls Council is expected to be open about resources available for Covid-19 relief for an effective COVID-19 response. Furthermore, hiding information suggests mismanagement of funds and disempowers citizens from demanding accountability from the Council.

### **A plea to Epworth Local Board to add more mobile vaccination centers for COVID-19, Epworth. Harare**

The satellite town of Epworth situated 15km South East of Harare comprises of many locations in it including Chiremba, Chinamano, Munyuki, Overspill, Glenwood Park among others. Epworth community is also known to have a huge population which according to the 2012 national census is the fifth largest city with many people. The dormitory suburb has only

three COVID- 19 vaccination centers for population of more than 500 000. Residents walk a distance of eight to ten kilometers seeking for a COVID- 19 vaccination center and this is a great disadvantage for people with disabilities to reach those centers to get vaccinated. Zimmorning post interviewed a resident of Epworth failing to get vaccinated "Obey Midzi said.

The centers are not enough hence a war cry from residents to Epworth Local Board (ELB) is that more centers have to be added especially mobile clinics. There is need for wide coverage of vaccination centers if Epworth Local Board wants to achieve more people getting vaccinated though it's a choice by oneself to be vaccinated. More vaccination centers have got an advantage of mobilizing more people at one point. The use of advertising methods is also being advised, like use of Pamphlets, mobile radios giving information about COVID- 19 vaccination and Centers available. Residents of Epworth are also not getting enough information about this vaccine only conspiracy theories circulating on social media hence putting fear in many people and this contributed to low vaccine uptake. I encourage Epworth Local Board to copy the mobile clinic strategy, as is employed by the Population Services Zimbabwe, so as to avoid complaints from residents that they didn't get vaccinated because the vaccine centers were located far from other people.

### **COVID-19 Vaccination Program in Marondera Urban, Marondera**

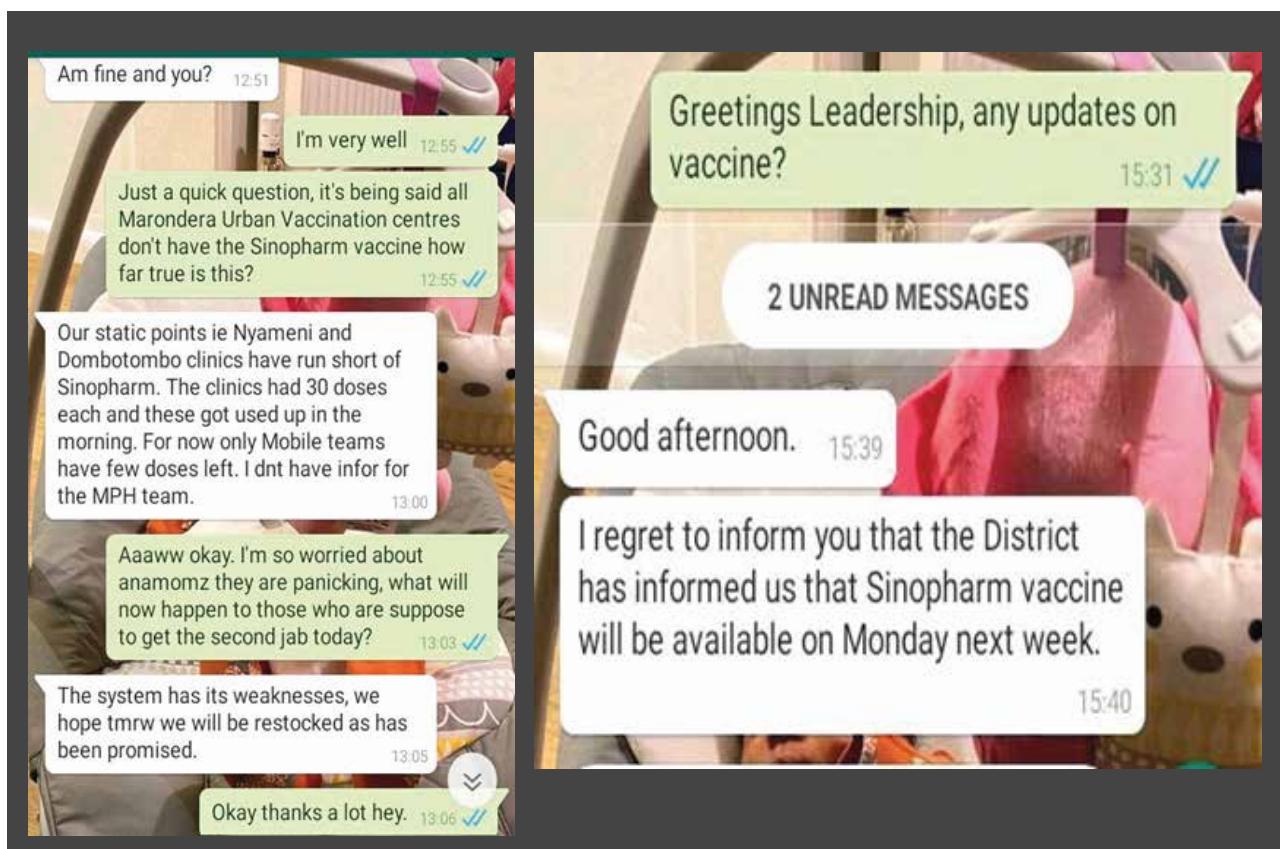
The COVID-19 vaccination program was well embraced in Marondera as most of the residents received their first jab. Some residents received the Sinopharm vaccine whilst others received the Sinovac vaccine. Visits at the Vaccination centers in Marondera which are Nyameni Clinic, Dombotombo Clinic and Marondera Provincial Hospital has shown how residents embraced the program. The majority are still receiving the first jab of the vaccine whilst some have started to receive their second jab. Residents interviewed expressed their gratitude to the government on a noble move to cater for every citizen to be vaccinated freely.

Meanwhile, unconfirmed news that were circulating on Thursday 29 April stated that all the three centers had ran out of the Sinopharm vaccines, this caused a lot of panicking especially the elderly who were supposed to receive their second jab today. An unidentified concerned resident was heard shouting "vatanga manurse aye kuita corruption." Was this really the cause? I also received the news with great shock because I received my second jab on Wednesday 28 April 2021 around 4:30pm and never thought of having Sinopharm vaccine shortage in Marondera.

Communication with a member of the vaccination team via WhatsApp confirmed that Nyameni and Dombotombo Clinics had run out of the Sinopharm vaccine since they had only 30 doses each which were used up in the morning of Thursday 29 April 2021 and only the mobile teams had a few doses left. He however, didn't have information about Marondera Provincial Hospital yet but hoped that by Friday 30 April the Sinopharm vaccine will be restocked as promised. The main store for the vaccine is Mahusekwa District Hospital which is 57km away from the urban community thus posing logistical challenges in transportation and redistribution to vaccination centers.

Residents who were supposed to receive their jab on the 29th of April were urged to remain calm as the team was expecting another batch of the Sinopharm vaccines on Friday 30 April. Efforts to get a comment from Marondera Provincial Hospital were fruitless as the reception number went unanswered. Unverified information stated that some clinics in the outskirts of Marondera had reserved Sinopharm vaccine i.e., the Ridigita (20kms out of Marondera CBD) and St Thomas (about 10kms out of Marondera CBD) prison clinics. A visit to St Thomas Prison Clinic with a local resident who wanted to receive his second jab clearly gave evidence that the Sinopharm vaccines was stocked. We spent close to 2hours at the Clinic and there was no sign of anyone coming for vaccination. By the time of submitting this human-Interest story, the member of the vaccination team had not made an official statement but he notified me that the District had advised that the Sinopharm vaccines will be available on Monday the 3rd of May.

Now, the question is, will every citizen be vaccinated? Didn't the government receive or purchase adequate Sinopharm vaccines? What will happen to those in need of the Sinopharm vaccine second jab? Local residents are already panicking will they be calm? Time will unravel all these questions.



SOURCE: WHATSAPP CHAT WITH THE COVID 19 VACCINATION TEAM MEMBER

## **Lack of Transparency and Accountability in Chipinge, Chipinge District**

Lack of transparency is one of the challenges that have troubled Chipinge residents for a long time. Currently, the biggest issue is the appointment of Mr Mutemeri, the Town Treasurer as the acting Town Secretary. Mr Mutemera who is the chief architect and the brains behind the fraud and corruption activities happening with Chipinge Town Council. His appointment without a forensic audit that has been requested by the residents brings to a conclusion that there is some evidence that they want to destroy. Residents and business community are crying over rates, water supply, planning and licences imposed by Mr Mutemera yet residents remain unheard. Now he has two critical roles within the Town Council. These roles do not appear to have any checks or balances and proper accountability to the residents for whom he should serve. I feel that there should be an investigation and a thorough audit to bring transparency to Chipinge residents. In a way to dig more information I conducted a meeting with Mr Muhlupheko the chairman of Chipinge Residents Trust.

He showed displeasure in the running of the council. It seems as if the councillors do not know their role in council. He emphasised on the issue of Chipinge Country Club (recreational centre) which is being privatised yet there is no single document that shows that it is no longer the Chipinge Town Council's property and the rentals are being collected by Mrs Dorothy Chitima. After he had asked for the file that's when he had that the record room caught fire a few days later. He wanted the country club to stop functioning till ownership is disclosed. He also showed discomfort about the missing solar panels. These solar panels were said to be taken by the town secretary (Susan Dube) and she replaced them with substandard solar panels. The solar panels were donated but the council board is saying a that they bought them for devolution. He also said they was need for transparency on where is the money for parking is going. The hiring of police officers and soldiers on parking areas and paying them \$100USD per week which is not in the by law was also brought to their concern. After the discussion he highlighted that there must be separation between ZANU PF headquarters and Chipinge Rural Council. This is because there is no evidence that there are paying rent and they are also interfering into the day to day running of the rural council.

## **Devolution funds not yielding it's targeted results in Epworth.**

Devolution funds were disbursed for capital projects nationwide as the government of Zimbabwe wants to decentralize development in many parts of the country as well as helping councils to yield targeted projects. However, this initiative by the government is failing to produce results. On this note, fire sparked as Epworth Local board (ELB) Finance Director Gabriel Mazarire has been suspended on allegations of abusing funds that were allocated to the local authority for devolution by Finance Minister Mthuli Ncube. Gabriel Mazarire was suspended earlier this month by Epworth Local Board (ELB) Secretary Winston Mhanda and is set to appear before a Ministry of Local Government Public Works and National Housing disciplinary committee. The suspension was sanctioned by Mhanda after he discovered that Mazarire had approved release of funds together with former chairperson Batanai Masunda without his knowledge. Zimmorning posts quoted the suspension letter which read " You have been suspended from your

position as Finance Director with immediate effect for misuse of funds, you shall appear before a disciplinary hearing within twenty-one days. It is allegedly said that Gabriel Mazarire took advantage of National lockdown in the beginning of the year 2021, the council was paying salaries with this devolution funds since there was no enough revenue being collected for service delivery hence set aside the first priorities of capital projects. It is important to investigate the abuse devolution funds and there is need for Epworth Local Board to select a team which is independent from the council like provincial committees to oversee the use of these funds for capital projects which later help in the development of the community. There is need for transparency and accountability as key issues in the Public Finance Management (PFM).

Epworth Resident Development Association (ERDA) Coordinator Peter Nyapetwa told the Zimmorning post that it is important to investigate the abuse of devolution funds. Mr Nyapetwa said that "At the moment the Minister of Finance is realising funds but without an Act of Parliament as well as accountability systems to safeguard these funds, therefore the councils can use the money for anything else and get away with it." Devolution funds, if effectively and efficiently utilised will enhance the capacity of local authorities and communities to take control of their own developmental agendas and this will foster inclusivity of all stakeholders. Stiffer penalties and measures are to be taken into consideration to deal with unscrupulous behaviours in the use of devolution funds.

### **The Struggle to Access Water in Arda Transau, Mutare**



A PICTURE OF AN OPEN WELL WHERE SOME RESIDENTS ARE FETCHING WATER FOR DOMESTIC USE.

ARDA Transau Community is facing continuous shortage of water due to administrative bungling caused by the local government ministry and the ZINWA. The relocated Community from Chiadzwa was promised a handful of packages including piped water as part of compensation. As it turned out, this was not fulfilled as they are now made to pay for the

piped water to ZINWA. For the past two weeks they could not access water as ZINWA threatened to close it for good. This is due to failure of Community members to pay for the rates. They allege that they are not employed and that the company is deviating from the original agreement that the companies were going to pay. They are required to pay equivalent of USD \$3 per month and to an unemployed it's too much. We have not considered the elderly and those who are physically challenged. So as a solution, those with water disconnected by ZINWA are resorting to using water direct from Odzi river and some unprotected wells nearby. These open wells are also being used by livestock.

According to Section 77 of the Constitution states that all citizens are entitled to clean and safe water suitable for human consumption. As it turned out, they are not enjoying their rights. Cases of diarrhea related to dirty water once rose to 45 patients on a single day. Unfortunately, the clinic had no enough medication to attend to them. The test taken revealed the water was contaminated. Also, it increases the burden of unpaid care work to women who are forced to wake up at 4 am to fetch water for a 2km journey to Odzi river. The girl child is exposed to potential sexual abuse on the way to and from the river. As the residents sought to resolve the impasse, they approached the company ZCDC which indicated that they are facing operational challenges hence they can continue subsidizing the water reticulation at ZINWA site at Odzi. As usual Mutare district council officials indicated that they are not capacitated to pay for the water for residents use. To compound the situation, the electricity supplier ZESA is threatening to discontinue their electricity to Odzi water pump.

As an alternative measure the councilor, Mr. Mujaji and the community agreed to pay a flat fee of \$1 to try and offset the water arrears ballooning to a ZW\$500 000. However, the matter of water supply challenges cannot be solved through handouts. The issue of proper channeling of mining revenue comes into play. The mining communities have to benefit from mining activities within their communities according to section 13 (4) of the Constitution. These relocated families have not been compensated till now yet mining activities are going on. The issue of priorities on allocation and distribution of resources has to be reconsidered and set well, lest citizens continue wallowing in poverty yet minerals are extracted on a daily basis without bringing sustainable development to mining communities and the nation at large.

### **The Case of Harare Water, Glen View, Harare**

During the month of April, 2021, the central government released US\$9.3 million to Harare City Council for rehabilitation of Morton Jeffrey water works. These funds were released as part of devolution funds from the government. For a long time, Harare has been experiencing water shortages due to the failure by Morton Jeffrey water works to pump enough water from Lake Chivero. The water works which was constructed in 1954 cannot cope with the increased population of the city and its dormitory towns. The government of Zimbabwe has awarded the tender for this rehabilitation to a South African company called Agrico without going to tender. From its name one is tempted to assume that it specialises in agriculture. Harare residents have not forgotten the 2011 US144 million loan facility from the China Exim bank where the China Machinery Engineering Corporation (CMEC) was contracted to upgrade the water works. The upgrade was not completed after the contractor claimed that they had only accessed US\$72 million which was half the project amount. Residents do not know what happened to the other half yet they are now being expected to service the debt together with the interest accrued. This is despite the fact that in 2018 the government through Harare City Council signed a US\$868 million loan from China for water sanitation projects with the same company China

Machinery Engineering Corporation (CMEC) being the contractor. The interest of this matter is that Harare City Council is signing loan facilities without the knowledge of residents. Most of these Chinese loans lack transparency and accountability. They don't follow national laws for public finance management. Tenders in all these Chinese deals are shrouded in controversy. Most of the China aid and investment creates an obligation for recipients to favour Chinese service providers for contracts. It seems most of these projects are only cash cows since they are never completed. For the Zimbabwe government these Chinese deals act as public relations stints for the look east policy. Also interesting is how the central government is treating the concept of devolution. Instead of devolving both power and resources they are going the opposite. While all this is happening the water situation is not improving. Most residents are working up in the early hours of the morning to fetch water from boreholes where they are also asked to pay. Some suburbs such as Budiriro and Glen View receive water from their taps two days a week. The water situation has complicated lives during this period of the pandemic. Apart from the infrastructure at Morton Jeffrey water works the procumbent of chemicals is also eating much in the council budget. Faced with these debt issues which will affect the provision of service delivery, residents need to advocate for a debt audit to ascertain how the borrowed funds were used. This audit will go a long way in formulating debt rehabilitation mechanisms with provision of services in mind.

#### **An outcry by the Penhalonga - Hauna residents, Mutasa Rural District Council.**

Residents of Penhalonga-Hauna, who serve as the highest revenue collection points for the 31 administrative wards of Mutasa Rural District, are clamouring for the rates to fall as it doesn't speak to the harsh economic conditions they're living in especially with COVID-19 induced hardships. Water charges were 0.50usd per cubic meter and now it has shot to 0,68usd refuse collection was 2usd and now 5usd and development levy as well. This didn't go well with the rate payers as they felt being robbed. "Mutasa RDC are failing to provide service delivery and account for the revenue they are collecting to the residents hence there is no need to hike rates without proper justification says Mr Katsidzira" One resident Mr Chikoti said, "MRDC used to sub contract some players on refuse collection because of non-availability of the refuse truck but since the council had purchased the truck with devolution funds we expect them to lower the charges rather than hiking them" True to his word the council has been on record saying they have bought the refuse truck in March 2020 but because of COVID-19 the truck is not yet delivered. Residents are bitter on how the council prioritize their salaries and not service delivery. As a matter of urgency through the residents' association and the Social and economic justice ambassadors the residents passed resolutions on rates to fall. Residents managed to write a petition to the Chief Executive Officer demanding rates to fall and are awaiting responses.

#### **The Case of Illegal Coke/Coal Mining in Hwange District**

At the mention of Hwange town, people think of coal and coke some think of the game park were the big 5 is found. For the Chinese investors they think of business opportunities. Hwange town used to be a mining town which only had bachelors coming in to live in the coal fields town. with globalisation, everything changed. Suburbanization emerged proper housing was developed though not the standard ideal home. The health sector improved some technical and vocation schools emerged as skilled personnel was needed in the mines. This human interest story is on the illegal mining of coke and coal which has led to human and wildlife conflict in the coal city.

The people of Hwange inclusive of women and children have become victims of illegal mining of coal as they carry 10kg sacks of mealie meal to put the coal they find while digging. They then sell a 10kg bag of coal to the Chinese and other interested people for 60usd cents which is not even enough to buy a loaf of bread. At times the payment of the bags of coal takes long to come. As such one can say that the investors take advantage of the vulnerability of the woman and have cheap labour.

Women and children are the marginalised group of people and have to make ends meet hence are forced to be labourers. Fathers now reject their unborn babies and some are in the diaspora and have long forgotten their families. This has made women sometimes work as general hands in the local mining companies. During the COVID-19 era women were retrenched from these mines and their only resort was to do illegal mining or extraction of coal from private property. This has resulted in some practising the activity in the bushes of cause with other companies doing so. Flora and fauna has been destroyed and land has been left unclaimed which has become a hazard to the people. Human and wildlife conflicts have resulted as animals now flee the bushes or parks to live with the humans.

In one incident, there was a mini riot in Madumabisa village as some workers were mistaken for illegal miners. The policeman shot two ladies who were in the cross fire and were coming from work. Their lives were at stake and were referred to Mpilo hospital.

Coal in Hwange will always be a source of conflict among individuals and companies as it holds value to the Hwange people.

#### **Gweru vendors speak on Mtapa market stalls. ...as they demand proper service provision from Gweru council.**

About 16 960 families lost their source of livelihood, while Gweru City Council lost close to \$5million dollars in potential revenue inflow, following government's directive to demolish illegal vending stalls in March last year. The move saw Gweru city council constructing new market stalls in Mtapa which were set to be allocated to vendors on the 4th of April 2021, as the site was expected to accommodate 4200 regularized informal traders, it has been revealed. However, most vendors have since registered their concern over the completion of the stalls saying policy monitoring and public accountability was not prioritized by the local authority in influencing citizen participation on the development. Speaking during an interview to Angeline Zivanai, the Gweru Vendors Association(GVA) Organising Secretary, highlighted that, vendors who suffered from the kudzanai markets demolitions had no option but to look for space to sell as they had to earn a living. "This is our source of livelihood.

We have to put bread on the table day in day out. Council was quiet on the way forward and when the President announced lockdown, we gladly listened and went home. When restrictions were relaxed, we expected the place to be habitable for vendors but it turned to be a joke. "We expected the market site to be furnished with toilets and water points because it accommodates 4200 vendors but nothing tangible has been done, not even one name was published hence revealing lack of transparency and accountability on the allocation process." "We expected City of Gweru to be transparent in their manner of conducting business. We thought that by flighting their posters on the dates of allocation for the vending stalls they

were willing to do this in a transparent manner following the Vending list which we paid \$72 RTGs to register with council., "said Zivanai. She further highlighted that information was key to enhance citizen participation in governance and economic development "Chapter 4 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, Section 62(1) clearly states that: Every Zimbabwean citizen or permanent resident, including juristic persons and the Zimbabwean Media, has the right of access to any information held by the State or by any institution or agency of government at every level in so far as the information is required in the interests of public accountability. "Upon requesting clarity on this issue, the council said it had become hard to allocate stalls as vendors had already served themselves. Some of the information was never disclosed to us because if you take a closer look there are only two mobile toilets and no safe water sources.

Vendors have since taken it upon themselves to contribute a dollar (\$1) each to hire mobile toilets, fetch water, and supervise these ablution facilities. "The remaining money from our contributions channelled towards gloves, toilet disinfections and emptying of the mobile toilets when full. We have since obtained volunteers who fetch water and empty the mobile toilets. We have also urged every vendor to have a bottle of sanitizer as we are still battling the COVID-19 pandemic." she added. Commenting on the commissioning of Mtapa markets stalls yesterday by the Minister of Women Affairs, Community, Small to Medium Enterprises Sthembiso Nyoni, Zivanai expressed dismay over council's cosmetic ways of service provision. "it is unfortunate that water was open for us as the Minister was coming yesterday (29 April 2021) but after the ceremony they removed the tap. We are now back to our old bucket system. Tell us! Is there justice and transparency in all this we even wonder? "We have 32 bags of cement which were donated to us by our well-wishers but we cannot build toilets for ourselves on council property. We are willing to give them the cement but we cannot trust our own council officials, they are corrupt." she said. Meanwhile Gweru Vendors Association has more than 2000 registered members and operates on the \$1 subscription policy.



+263-242-776830



[zimcodd@zimcodd.co.zw](mailto:zimcodd@zimcodd.co.zw)



Zimcodd



@zimcodd1



[www.zimcodd.org.zw](http://www.zimcodd.org.zw)