



THE WEEKEND READER

"Your Weekly Read on Debt, Development & Socio-Economic Justice"

FOOD INSECURITY REMAINS A DAILY CHALLENGE FOR ZIMBABWEAN CITIZENS

Zimbabwe has been facing economic depression over the last three decades with the effects unfairly affecting the poorest and most vulnerable citizens. Currently, Zimbabwe has one of the worst year-on-year inflation rates, hovering around 200% whilst annual food inflation sits at 121%, one of the highest in the world. This has led to an increase in food poverty that worsens vulnerability of citizens. Ironically, politically charged sentiments shared by the political elite including the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Professor Mthuli Ncube are that 'we are ok as economic fundamentals are sound and a promising future beckons.' This lays need to state the actual facts and status of poverty in the country as experienced by citizens rather than figures not translating to reality.



Food poverty leads to reliance on aid and government assistance which is largely insignificant

The problem of Crony economics

Poverty in Zimbabwe is not coincidental. It is an expected result of the structural makeup of the economy controlled by cartels who hold the means of production and inadvertently access to national wealth. The most basic of resources such as land and abundant minerals are controlled by the ruling party and aligned cronies as allocated during the land reform program in the early 2000's² and recently as mining concessions have been given to 'foreign investors' with no visible return to local communities. On the land question, the redistributed land has done little as the section of citizens who have accessed it also struggle due to inability to raise capital for production. As a result, the land remains largely unused.³

1. <https://www.newsday.co.zw/local-news/article/20010077/food-poverty-continues-to-haunt-zim-wb>

2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-11764004>

3. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/zimbabwe-land-redistribution-does-little-for-many-black-farmers/2010537>

In the same vein, corruption amongst those who hold the means of production remains a serious challenge. It is reported that Zimbabwe loses an estimate \$100 million per month and \$1 Billion annually in gold leakages⁴. These losses are facilitated by the political elite as recent revelations in the Al Jazeera expose show that there is a level of government complicity⁵. This points to an even bigger challenge as it is a reflection of decayed institutions managing public resources. This raises serious concerns for us as a people based, pro-poor coalition because the masses lose out on significant resources that could have changed the below indicators for them;

- 7.7 million people are living in extreme poverty,
- 3.8 million rural people are in need of food assistance & 1.6 million urban people are in need of food assistance,⁶
- 4.8 million children living in poverty & 1.6 million children living in extreme poverty.⁷
- 10% of children aged between 6-24 months are consuming a minimally acceptable diet.
- 4.6 million students are in need of Basic Education Module Assistance (BEAM).

The issue of food security or its absence is not a political one but a social economic justice issue reflecting the livelihoods of citizens and more importantly, the poor. As such, it is key that any reporting on the matter is factual and considerate of their plight. Indeed, poverty has a human face and it leaves citizens in indignity. Government has called for a helping hand from bilateral partners due to its inability to support those facing food insecurity. Being a pro-poor movement, we then recommend that government meaningfully address the challenge of food insecurity. Only then can the 7,9 million citizens living in extreme poverty be afforded the dignity of a decent life.

Recommendations

- Strengthening institutions such as the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission and Parliament to reduce corruption and illicit financials flows.
- The government must urgently address the wage erosion issue being experienced by workers to restore confidence and efficiency in the public service sector.
- Government should provide social safety nets to cushion vulnerable groups including people with disability, the elderly, children and women.
- The Ministry of Finance & Economic Development & the wider Executive should foster fiscal discipline to reduce borrowing pressure and strengthen domestic resource mobilization. Further, resource backed loans should be curbed as present deals sour for citizens and we continue to lose value.

4. <https://www.voaafrica.com/a/zimbabwe-revenue-smuggling/5507145.html>

5. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/5/zimbabwe-to-investigate-gold-smuggling-after-al-jazeera-expose>

6. ZIMVAC Report 2022

7. UNICEF 2021 Zimbabwe Annual Report

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