



ZIMCODD

WEEKEND READER

27 MAR 2026

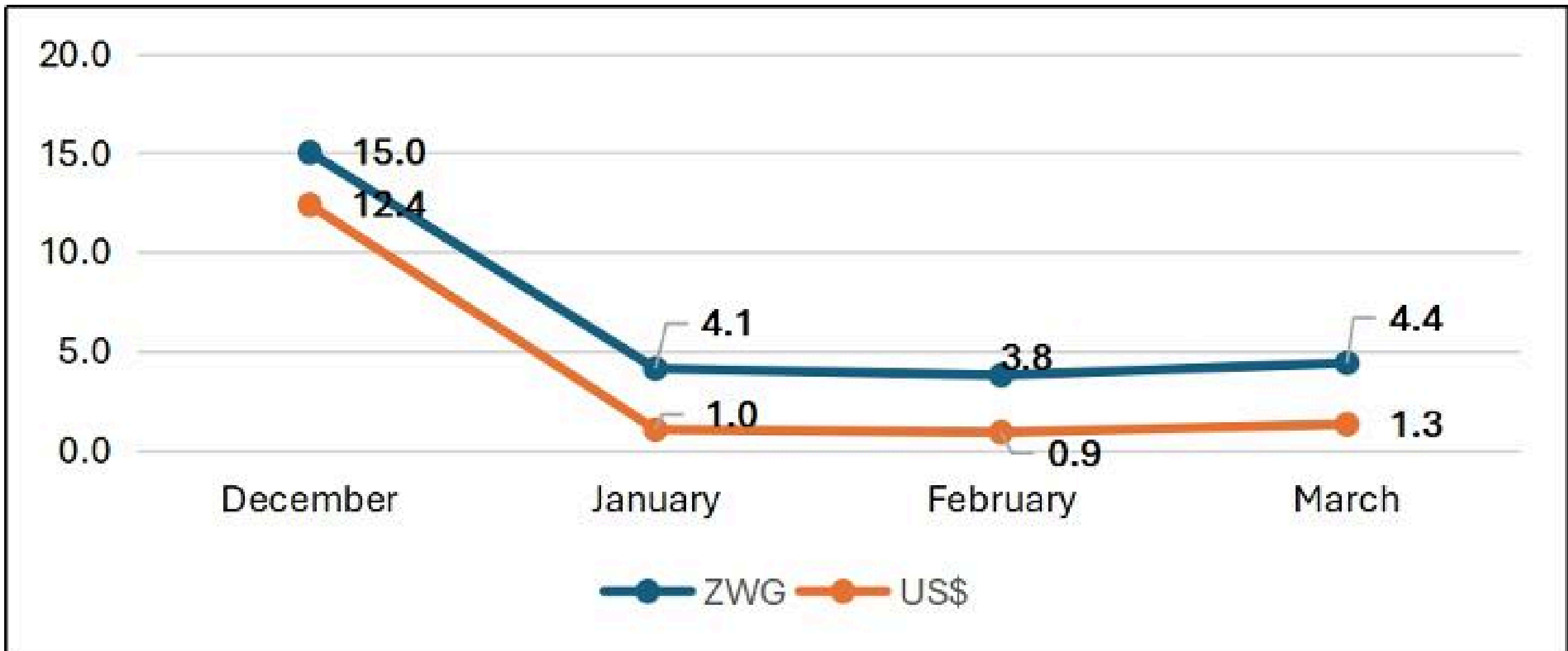
"Your Weekly Read on Debt, Development & Socio-Economic Justice"

The Socio-Economic Impact of the March 2026 Inflation Increase

The Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency has reported an increase in both ZiG and US dollar inflation rates for March 2026, signalling growing economic pressure on Zimbabwean households. Year on year inflation rose to 4.4% in ZiG from 3.8% in February, while USD inflation increased to 1.3% from 0.9% as shown by the graph below.



Fig 1: The year-on-year inflation rate for December 2025 to March 2026



Source: Zimstat March 2026 CPI report

While these figures may appear moderate at headline level, their real impact on ordinary citizens especially low-income and vulnerable households is severe. Rising prices are eroding purchasing power and limiting access to basic needs such as food, transport, and healthcare. The recent rise in inflation has largely been driven by increases in fuel prices, influenced by global factors such as the Gulf geopolitical tensions and domestic fiscal decisions, particularly higher fuel taxes. Petrol prices rose by nearly 27% within two weeks in March, while government taxes and levies on fuel increased by over 64%.

The current situation raises serious concerns as it affects the cost of living for vulnerable households. Instead of cushioning citizens from global shocks, such as ongoing geopolitical tensions affecting fuel prices, current fiscal measures risk transferring the burden onto already struggling households. This undermines the principles of fairness, equity and inclusive economic policy. Such tax-driven price increases disproportionately affect lower-income households, who spend a larger share of their income on basic goods and services.

Why this matters?

Fuel is not just a transport cost, it is a core input into the entire economy. When fuel rises:

- transport costs increase for commuters and traders,
- food prices rise due to higher distribution costs,
- the cost of water, electricity and small-scale production increases,
- service delivery costs for councils and institutions escalate

From ZIMCodd’s people-centred lens, the key concern is not only that prices are rising, but who carries the burden and whether policy is protecting household welfare. Tax-driven increases in fuel costs are regressive in effect. They disproportionately harm low-income households because these households spend a larger share of their income on essentials including transport, food, cooking energy and basic services. The result is a form of “silent extraction” where the real adjustment happens in households through reduced consumption and increased unpaid coping strategies.

This raises serious questions about the fairness and equity of the current policy mix. In periods of global volatility, a just fiscal approach should aim to cushion citizens from external shocks, not shift the full weight of adjustment onto households least able to absorb it. When households absorb the shock, the economy pays later through reduced productivity, weaker demand, poorer health outcomes and deepening inequality.

ZIMCODD calls for immediate measures that safeguard the social contract and place citizens at the centre of macroeconomic management:

Reconsider recent fuel tax and levy increases.

Government should review the timing, scale, and structure of fuel taxes to avoid amplifying global price shocks for households and small businesses. Where revenue needs exist, pursue alternatives that are less inflationary and more progressive.

Align fiscal and monetary policy with real-time conditions.

Authorities must adjust policy settings in response to evolving global price risks and domestic market behaviour, rather than relying on assumptions of stability. Clear communication and coordinated policy action are essential to avoid uncertainty-driven price hikes.

Prioritise shock-responsive social protection and food security.

Reallocate resources toward interventions that directly reduce household vulnerability, targeted food support, school feeding where necessary and protection of critical public services (health, water, transport access), especially in high-risk communities.

Conclusion

March 2026 inflation data signals pressure that can quickly become a household crisis if not managed with a people-centered approach. Inflation is not only an economic statistic, it is a lived experience and policy choices determine whether citizens are protected or pushed deeper into hardship. A fair and accountable response must balance revenue objectives with the constitutional obligation to advance welfare, reduce inequality and ensure that economic governance remains pro-people and pro-poor.

Taxes and Us: Women's Voices from the Ground

What does taxation look like from the perspective of women in Zimbabwe's informal economy?

On 18 March 2026, the Making Tax Work for Women (#MTW4W) platform convened women from across the country, bringing together informal traders, vendors, and smallholder farmers to share their lived realities. The conversation shifted taxation from policy language to everyday experience revealing how taxes shape livelihoods, care work, safety, and dignity.

At the centre of the dialogue was a clear and powerful message:

women are consistently contributing to the system but the system is not delivering back in services.

Participants spoke about the multiple taxes and charges they pay, including VAT, IMTT, market fees, licences, and land taxes. Yet across provinces, women highlighted a widening gap between what they contribute and what they receive. Poor road infrastructure, limited healthcare access, unsafe trading spaces, and inadequate water systems were cited as everyday realities.

From a people-centred and feminist perspective, this is more than a question of tax burden it is about justice, redistribution, and the social contract. When public services fail, women absorb the impact through unpaid care work, lost income, and increased vulnerability.

[Read more here](#)

Zimbabwe's fragile economic stability is facing a new external threat.



Following the escalation of conflict in the Middle East on 28 February 2026, global markets have reacted sharply sending shockwaves through fuel, agriculture, and supply chains. For Zimbabwe, an import-dependent economy, this is not a distant geopolitical event. It is a direct pressure on already strained livelihoods.

Coming just a day after the 2026 Monetary Policy Statement, the crisis threatens to reverse recent gains such as stabilising inflation and exchange rate predictability. But beyond macroeconomic indicators, the real impact is being felt where it matters most at household level.

At the centre of the disruption is fuel.

Global oil prices surged dramatically in early March, triggering rapid local price increases. Within just two weeks, petrol prices in Zimbabwe rose from US\$1.56 to over US\$2.17 per litre, with diesel following a similar trend. While global factors are driving the spike, local structural issues are making the situation worse.

Taxes and levies now account for a significant portion of fuel costs, while ethanol blending linked to monopoly supply dynamics adds further pressure. The result is a stark reality: Zimbabwean consumers are absorbing both global shocks and domestic inefficiencies at the same time.

[Read more here](#)

Breaking Barriers: When Families Are Pulled Apart and Children Carry the Burden

By Phillip Jakarasi, Rural Youth Collective

A Child Bearing Responsibility

In a household in Chambuta village, in the rural parts of Chiredzi South, a young girl wakes up before sunrise not to go to school, but to take care of her family.

She fetches water, prepares meals, and helps her younger siblings get ready for the day. Sometimes there is no food. Sometimes there is no money for school. Yet she carries responsibilities far beyond her years. Her story is not unique. Across rural Chiredzi, many children especially girls are left behind when parents migrate in search of work. They take on the roles of caregivers, household heads, and even surrogate parents, all while trying to continue their education.

Families Separated by Work and Migration

Many parents in these communities leave home to look for work in South Africa. They often go with the hope that they will earn enough to support their families. But the separation can last months, sometimes even years.

While parents are away, children like her must navigate life largely on their own. Some stay with grandparents or relatives who are too old or overwhelmed to provide full guidance. Others travel across borders with parents, only to return home and restart school because their learning was interrupted.

Each day brings its own challenges. Walking long distances to school, managing chores, and finding time to study, she faces responsibilities that most children her age should not have to carry. Along the way, she experiences loneliness, worry, and the heavy weight of expectation. In classrooms, this can look like distraction, disengagement, or quiet struggle but behind it is a determination to keep learning despite everything. Yet this is a learner who often falls behind in the classroom and labelled as 'playful or unintelligent'.



Cultural traditions sometimes add to her challenges. Boys may be taken to forests for initiation ceremonies that last weeks or months, while girls are expected to manage households, care for siblings, or fetch water. In some cases, girls are married early, ending their schooling altogether. These realities shape children's lives every day, dictating not only what they do but also what they can dream of achieving.

It is also worth mentioning that Chiredzi is one of the hottest regions in Zimbabwe. Temperatures often soar above 40°C. Classrooms with tin roofs and poor ventilation can make learning almost unbearable. Heavy rains can wash out roads and bridges, isolating children and sometimes even teachers. Many walk 15 to 20 kilometers to school each day, and when the path is blocked, education stops. Yet even when the learner reaches school, resources are limited. Textbooks are few, digital tools are scarce, and internet access is minimal. While learners in towns can access online resources and build digital skills, children in

Chambuta struggle to keep up.

Education for the rural learners really is different from his or her urban counterpart.

Reflections and Recommendations

From what I have seen every day as a Rural Youth Collective member, the challenges faced by children like her are not isolated. They are deeply tied to economic realities. When parents must leave home for months or years in search of work, when resources are scarce, and when schools struggle to provide the basics for learning, education suffers and children bear the cost.

Addressing these issues requires more than just temporary fixes. Schools need better infrastructure, from safe classrooms to accessible roads, and children need access to textbooks, digital tools, and supportive learning environments. Communities need awareness programs that emphasize the value of education, and policies must protect children especially girls from early marriage or cultural practices that disrupt schooling.

Yet underlying all these solutions is the economy. A stronger, more stable economy would mean that parents can remain with their children, provide for their families, and support schooling. It would mean that schools can be properly resourced, teachers can be retained, and communities can thrive. Without economic security, even well-designed policies struggle to reach those who need them most.

My observations lead me to conclude that improving rural education in Chiredzi and similar communities is inseparable from building a better economy. Resource allocation, school support, community engagement, and child protection all depend on the larger context of economic opportunity and stability. By investing in both education and the economy, we can ensure that children like her do not have to choose between survival and learning they can have both.

By sharing these stories as part of the Rural Youth Collective, I hope to highlight the hidden struggles faced by rural learners in Chiredzi and across Zimbabwe. Children like her show courage, determination, and resilience every day but they should not have to choose between survival and education. They deserve both



Opportunities

Work Package Officer

<https://www.goethe.de/ins/za/en/ueb/kar/wpo.html>

African Union Internships

https://jobs.au.int/job/Internship-Program/1506-en_US

Global Witness is hiring a Strategic Communications Consultant (Remote

https://globalwitness.org/en/careers/current-vacancies/strategic-communications-consultant/?utm_source=linkedin&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=

Verra seeks a Process Excellence and Implementation Lead (Consultant)

<https://ats.rippling.com/en-GB/verra-opportunities/jobs>

Amnesty International is hiring: Website Engineer Consultant

<https://careers.amnesty.org/jobs/vacancy/website-engineer-consultant-4220/4248/description/>



Celebrating Women's Month



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