



**ZIMCODD**

# WEEKEND READER

**29 MAY 2026**

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

## **ZIMCODD Expands Debt Justice Movement with Third Debt Justice Hub in Harare**



ZIMCODD marked another important milestone in its ongoing pursuit of debt justice and citizen accountability through the establishment of its third Debt Justice Hub in Harare under the project Strengthening Transparency and Accountability in Sovereign Debt Management.

The Debt Justice Hub is a community-based platform designed to strengthen citizens' understanding of public debt, public finance management and budget processes, while creating spaces for collective engagement and accountability. Through capacity building, dialogue and grassroots action, the Hub seeks to empower communities to demand transparent, inclusive and people-centred economic governance.



The establishment of the Harare Hub created an important platform for citizens to deepen their understanding of public finance, debt accountability and national budget processes. The session, facilitated by ZIMCodd Programmes Manager Mucha Midzi, focused on Public Finance Management (PFM) and Budget Fundamentals, unpacking how Zimbabwe's national budget functions, where government revenue is generated, how public resources are allocated and the implications of the country's growing debt crisis on service delivery and livelihoods.

Participants explored the realities of Zimbabwe's tax system, where ordinary citizens continue to shoulder a significant portion of the tax burden through Value Added Tax (VAT) and Pay As You Earn (PAYE), while concerns around mining revenue transparency, public borrowing and expenditure accountability remain unresolved.

The discussions further highlighted how increasing debt servicing obligations continue to compete with funding for critical social sectors such as health, education and social protection, ultimately affecting the quality of public services available to citizens.

Constitutional provisions on transparency, accountability and responsible public finance management were also examined during the session, reinforcing the importance of citizen participation in tracking public resources and demanding accountability from public institutions.

Through the #DebtJusticeNow campaign, ZIMCODD continues to amplify citizen voices and advance transparency, accountability and economic justice for all. The campaign is equipping communities with the knowledge and tools needed to follow the money, question public expenditure and advocate for transparent and people-centred governance systems.

As the Debt Justice Hubs continue to expand, they are becoming vital spaces for civic engagement, collective learning and community-led advocacy around debt justice and economic accountability in Zimbabwe.



# The implications of Gambling tax revenue to fund anti-drug fight

The Minister of Finance, Economic Development and Investment Promotion announced that revenue collected from gaming and gambling taxes will now be channelled towards programmes aimed at combating drug and substance abuse in Zimbabwe. This comes at a time when the country is facing increasing cases of drug and substance abuse, particularly among youths and vulnerable communities.

According to the Minister, taxes and levies imposed on gaming and gambling activities will be ring-fenced to support anti-drug interventions, including the construction of rehabilitation centres, awareness campaigns, and other anti-drug response mechanisms. This initiative has the potential to significantly contribute towards addressing the growing social crisis if public finance management principles such as transparency, accountability, efficiency, and effectiveness are fully adhered to.

The move to earmark gambling tax revenues demonstrates the importance of ring-fencing taxes to ensure that resources collected for specific social challenges are directed towards their intended purposes. It also highlights the need for Government to strengthen ring-fencing mechanisms across other critical taxes and levies that support essential public services and social protection programmes. It is against this background that the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) calls on Government to ring-fence additional taxes and levies, particularly those linked to health and social welfare financing. These include the Sugar Tax, Airtime and Mobile Data Health Levy, Fast Food Tax, Carbon Tax, and Fuel Levy, among others.

## Taxes and Levies without Ring-Fencing in 2026

Tax / Levy	Purpose	Ring-Fencing Status in 2026
Fuel Levy / Road Fund	Road maintenance and rehabilitation	Partially ring-fenced
Airtime and Mobile Data Health Levy	Health sector financing	Parliament pushing for stronger ring-fencing in 2026
Sugar Tax (Special Surtax on Sugar Content)	Cancer treatment and health financing	Not fully ring-fenced
Fast Food Tax	Non-communicable disease financing	Not ring-fenced
Carbon Tax / Environmental Levies	Environmental protection and climate response	Not ring-fenced
Gambling Tax / Betting Tax	Mental health services	Not fully ring-fenced.

While the initiative is commendable, effective implementation will depend on strong governance systems, public disclosure of collected revenues, and regular monitoring to ensure that funds are used for their intended purposes.

### **Conclusion**

The Government's decision to earmark gambling tax revenues towards combating drug and substance abuse is a progressive step towards strengthening domestic resource mobilisation for social protection and public health interventions in Zimbabwe. If properly implemented, the initiative can contribute significantly towards the establishment of rehabilitation centres, awareness campaigns, and support systems aimed at addressing the growing drug abuse crisis affecting communities, particularly youths.

From ZIMCODD's perspective, ring-fencing taxes and levies enhances transparency, accountability, and public trust in the management of public resources. However, the effectiveness of this initiative will largely depend on the Government's commitment to adhering to sound public finance management principles and ensuring that earmarked revenues are not diverted from their intended purposes. The initiative also presents an opportunity for Government to institutionalise ring-fencing across other strategic taxes and levies that support health, environmental protection, and social welfare programmes. ZIMCODD therefore urges Government to strengthen public finance accountability systems and ensure that all earmarked taxes genuinely benefit citizens through improved service delivery and social welfare support.

### **Recommendations**

- Government should establish a clear legal and institutional framework for the ring-fencing of gambling tax revenues to guarantee transparency and accountability.
- Treasury and relevant ministries should regularly publish reports on the amount of revenue collected and how the funds are being utilised.
- Parliament should strengthen oversight mechanisms to ensure that earmarked funds are directed towards rehabilitation centres, mental health services, and anti-drug programmes.
- Government should extend ring-fencing to other critical taxes and levies such as the Sugar Tax, Airtime and Mobile Data Health Levy, Carbon Tax, and Fast Food Tax to improve financing for health and social protection programmes.
- Civil society organisations and communities should be involved in monitoring the utilisation of ring-fenced funds to promote citizen participation and accountability.
- Government should prioritise preventive programmes, including youth empowerment, education, and community awareness initiatives, alongside rehabilitation efforts.
- Strong anti-corruption measures should be implemented to prevent leakages and misuse of ring-fenced revenues.
- The Ministry of Finance should align ring-fenced taxes with broader Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and social protection goals to ensure sustainable and equitable development outcomes.

## The Hidden Inequality Behind Harare's Smart Meters



Across Harare, the installation of prepaid smart water meters is being celebrated as a modern solution to the city's worsening water crisis. Local authorities argue that the new system will improve billing transparency, reduce water losses, and increase revenue collection. On paper, the policy appears efficient, rational and necessary for a struggling municipality.

Yet beneath the language of **“modernisation”** and **“cost recovery”** lies a deeply uncomfortable question: what happens when access to water increasingly depends on one's ability to pay? Recently, during a community discussion on service delivery and urban inequality, a woman from Sunningdale shared a story that captures the human reality behind these policy shifts. She explained that her household now spends nearly US\$40 every month on water. The cost had become so overwhelming that she considered travelling to a nearby suburb simply to wash blankets and heavy laundry where water was more affordable or accessible.

At first glance, this may sound like an isolated inconvenience. In truth, it exposes a much larger crisis unfolding quietly across Zimbabwe's urban spaces, the widening inequality gap in access to basic services. Water is not a luxury commodity. It is essential for life, health, dignity, sanitation and survival. However, for many low-income households, water is increasingly becoming unaffordable. Families are now forced to ration water, delay washing, reduce hygiene practices or divert money meant for food, transport, school fees and healthcare towards utility bills.

The reality is that prepaid systems affect communities differently. For affluent households, prepaid water meters may simply mean improved monitoring and convenience. But for struggling households already trapped in economic hardship, the system can function as a mechanism of exclusion. Once credit runs out, access to water effectively stops. This creates a dangerous form of inequality where the wealthy enjoy uninterrupted access to essential services while poorer communities live under constant anxiety of disconnection.

The burden falls most heavily on women. In most households, women remain primarily responsible for washing, cooking, caregiving, cleaning and maintaining family health. When water becomes expensive or inaccessible, women absorb the physical and emotional burden. They wake earlier, travel further, reduce their own needs and carry the invisible labour required to keep households functioning under impossible conditions.

The woman from Sunningdale was not merely talking about laundry. She was speaking about dignity, survival and the daily sacrifices ordinary citizens are making in a collapsing urban economy. Local authorities are correct to point out that Harare loses significant amounts of treated water through leakages, aging infrastructure and inefficient billing systems. Revenue collection is important for sustaining service delivery. However, social justice demands that we ask who ultimately pays the price for these inefficiencies.

Should ordinary residents shoulder the burden of decades of infrastructure neglect? Should vulnerable households finance municipal recovery through increasingly commercialised access to water? Can essential services truly be left to market logic in a country where unemployment, informality, and poverty continue to rise? These are moral and political questions about the kind of society Zimbabwe is becoming.

Globally, debates around prepaid water systems remain highly contested because they often transform citizenship rights into transactional relationships. Access to clean water becomes dependent not on human need, but on purchasing power. In deeply unequal societies, this risks institutionalising exclusion. Zimbabwe's Constitution recognises the right to safe, clean and potable water. This right cannot exist meaningfully if affordability barriers prevent citizens from accessing the service. As cities modernise, justice must remain central. Efficiency without equity can deepen social fractures. Revenue collection without social protection can punish the poor. Development without dignity cannot be sustainable.

What Zimbabwe urgently needs is not simply smarter technology but smarter justice-oriented policy making. This includes:

- pro-poor water tariffs,
- lifeline allocations for vulnerable households,
- genuine resident consultations,
- infrastructure rehabilitation,
- and stronger accountability mechanisms within local authorities.
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Most importantly, policymakers must remember that behind every statistic, billing system and infrastructure upgrade are real people navigating impossible choices



## Upcoming events



**ZIMBABWE  
ANNUAL DEBT  
CONFERENCE**

**8<sup>TH</sup> EDITION**

**SAVE  
THE  
DATE**

**15-17 JULY 2026**

MASVINGO



 **SADC**

**Peoples  
Summit**

**DURBAN 2026**

**SAPSN**  
Southern African People's  
Solidarity Network  
People's Control & People's Drive  
Regional Challenge to Globalisation

# Opportunities

## Fellowships & programmes

### **International Geneva Peace Fellowship Programme 2026/2027 (for young professionals, funded)**

<https://www.opportunitiesforafricans.com/the-international-geneva-peace-fellowship-programme-2026-2027/>

Due: 7 June 2026

### **UICC Technical Fellowships 2026 (cancer/public-health professionals)**

<https://www.opportunitiesforafricans.com/union-for-international-cancer-control-uicc-technical-fellowships-2026-for-public-health-professionals/>

Due: 4 June 2026

### **UNESCO/CJID Storytelling Fellowship 2026 (environmental journalists)**

<https://www.opportunitiesforafricans.com/unesco-cjid-storytelling-fellowship-2026-for-environmental-journalists/>

Due: 8 June 2026

### **EDGE of Existence Fellowships 2027/2029 (early-career conservationists, £15,000 grant)**

<https://www.opportunitiesforafricans.com/edge-of-existence-fellowships-2027-2029-for-early-career-conservationist/>

Due: 10 June 2026

### **LEAP Africa Social Innovators Fellowship (SIP) 2026 (young changemakers)**

<https://www.opportunitiesforafricans.com/leap-africas-social-innovators-fellowship-programme-sipa-2026-for-young-changemakers/>

Due: 12 June 2026

### **Kavli Prize Travel Fellowships 2026 (science journalists, fully funded to Norway)**

<https://www.opportunitiesforafricans.com/kavli-prize-travel-fellowships-2026-for-science-journalists/>

Due: 12 June 2026