

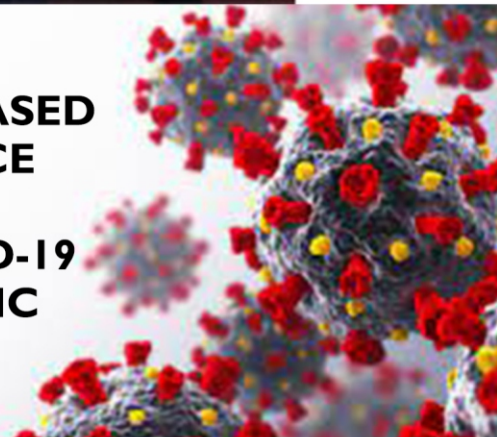
DEVELOPMENT WATCH

*Civil Society's
National Indicative Program
Monitoring
and
Advocacy*

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**GENDER-BASED
VIOLENCE
AND
THE COVID-19
PANDEMIC**



EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers

As we already highlighted in our previous issue, Development Watch Volume 3, Issue 3, this issue incorporates an analysis of the midterm review statement of the performance of the 2021 National Budget for the period January to June 2021. The statement was presented before the Parliament of Zimbabwe by Finance Minister Mthuli Ncube on Thursday last week.

The 2021 Mid-Term Budget and Economic Review provides an assessment of the performance of the economy and the 2021 Budget during the first half of the year, together with macro and fiscal outlook to year end. This is in compliance with Section 7 (2) (a) of the Public Finance Management Act and Section 9 of the Public Finance Management (General) Regulations of 2019. Guided by first half developments, the Review also gives Government an opportunity to make necessary policy re-alignments to ensure that set economic and fiscal objectives and targets for the year are met.

To note, The Mid-Year Budget Review is one of the key budget documents used by the International Budget Partnership (IBP) in carrying out the Open Budget Survey (OBS). The Mid-Year Budget Review presents an opportunity for the treasury to comprehensively assess the government's fiscal performance against the strategy established in the Enacted Budget. Thus, it should allow for an assessment of whether the budget is adequately coping with emerging macroeconomic developments, including changes in the prices, the state of implementation of the different elements of the budget, and revenue in the context of expected patterns.

You can read more on the Mid-Year Budget Review article on Page Two. The issue also touches on the role of Zimbabwean Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the Electoral Cycle amid the Covid-19 pandemic, and our role as NANGO in the Electoral process.

NANGO's Role in the Electoral Process

An example of the duty and role that CSOs take in the electoral process can be shown through the process that NANGO took in the 2018 harmonised elections. The work of NANGO in relation to the 30 July 2018 harmonised

elections were in five phases. The first phase involved setting up of policy engagement platforms to facilitate behaviour and attitude change, that put in place a community and national level infrastructure for peace. At the same time non-state actors interacted with key stakeholders such as political party leaders, independent commissions, development partners, traditional leaders, police amongst others.

The second phase involved CSO capacity building initiatives, on conflict prevention, management, resolution and transformation, voter education and election observation. The third phase involved dissemination of information on elections through various media platforms. The fourth phase monitored other stakeholders' participation in the electoral process such as the independent commissions, media, political parties, CSOs and security sector. This work led to the fifth phase of election observation and reporting.

CSO ENABLING OPERATING SPACE

As NANGO, our mandate in the leadership or coordination conjectures empower NANGO to represent the interests of the NGO Sector as well as catalysing the sector to speak on critical issues ranging from social, economic, political and environmental as well as CSOs enabling environment. Since our last issue, not much has been done by the Legislature in terms of creating an enabling operating environment for CSOs. CSOs have been continuously served with threats of closure/ban given that they failed to comply with the directives issued by different government agencies/ministries. NANGO will continue engaging with the relevant authorities to try and find a solution to this problem that CSOs are currently faced with.

Hope you will take time to go through the newsletter as it is packed with informative articles touching on issues affecting both CSOs and the public.

#StaySafe #MaskUpZimbabwe #CovidIsReal

Executive Director
Mr Leonard Mandishara

Designed By
Chris Katsaura

Is there progression in contextualizing and applying the tenets of Open Budget Survey in Zimbabwe? An analysis of the 2021 Mid-Year Budget Statement from transparency and accountability perspective



The Mid-Year Budget Review is one of the key budget documents used by the International Budget Partnership (IBP) in carrying out the Open Budget Survey (OBS). The Mid-Year Budget Review is an analysis of the budget's performance about halfway through the budget year. In Zimbabwe, this is provided for in Section 7 (2) (a) of the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA). In compliance to this provision, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED), Hon Professor Mthuli Ncube, presented the 2021 MidTerm Budget and Economic Review on the 29th of July 2021. The Mid-Year Budget and Economic Review presents an opportunity for the treasury to comprehensively assess the government's fiscal performance against the strategy established in the Enacted Budget. Thus, it allows for an assessment of whether the budget is adequately coping with emerging macroeconomic developments, including changes in the prices, the state of implementation of the different elements of the budget, and revenue in the context of expected patterns. The Mid Year Budget Review can inform adjustments or corrective measures in the allocation of resources between ministries or in the level of spending. For Zimbabwe where there is integrated results-based budget system, it is an opportunity to take stock of the progress in realising specific output targets in the implementation of the National Development Strategy (NDS) I.

In line with the expectations and guidelines set by IBP for the

MYB, it was anticipated to get a budget outlook and explain what factors might be responsible for those changes observed since the budget was enacted. This includes indications on any revisions to the economic assumptions that underline the original budget and make appropriate adjustments to the aggregate estimates for revenue, expenditures, and public borrowing. Thus, the 2021 MYB has provided an assessment of the aggregate fiscal strategy to suit the current economic environment, and effect adjustments to the fiscal policy stance in light of prevailing economic conditions.

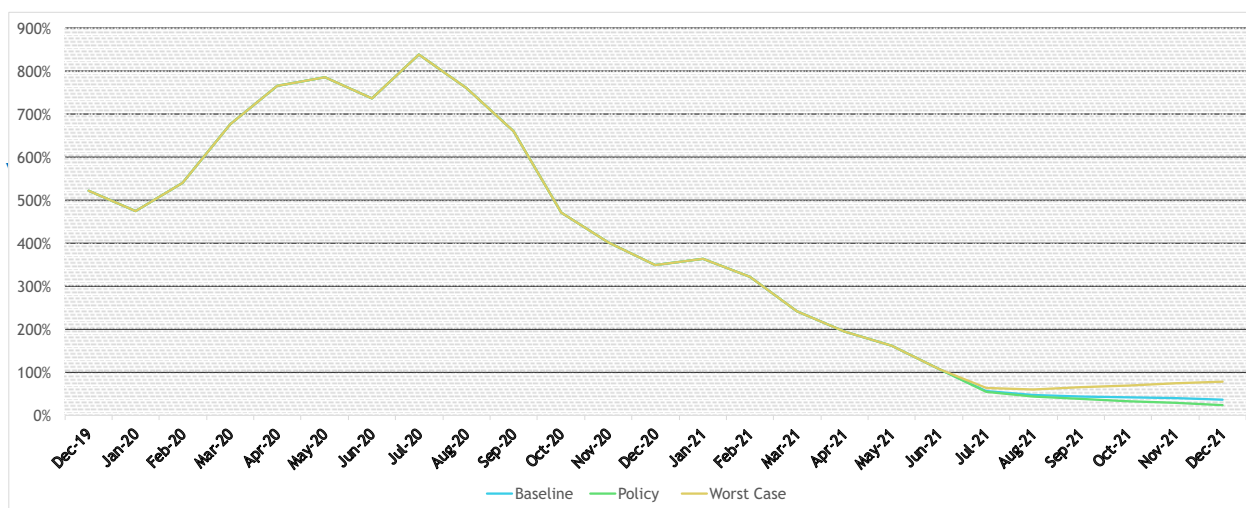
Internationally it is good practise for the treasury to ensure that full and transparent accounts are from time to time and not less than annually presented to parliament which will be expected to play its oversight role on the public finance management. Apart from mere adjustment of budget figures in line with the contextual analysis of the prevailing macroeconomic environment, the review gave an evaluation of progress made to-date in the implementation of the NDS I. From this dimension, the MYB presents interesting dynamics for various sectors of the country, which National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (NANGO) and other likeminded non state actors find it prudent to analyse, simplify and proffer recommendations which may become instrumental in the development of pro-people budget which may address the peculiar needs of diverse groups of citizens. From previous experience and past analysis of the same budget document, it is evident that the performance of the first 6 months of the year has an obvious bearing on the performance of the economy during the last half the year and overall on the attainment of the annual fiscal macro-economic targets such as GDP growth, sector growth, inflation, public debts and balance of trade positions.

Economic Performance Review: The review reaffirmed the government's commitment to implementing under the theme “*Building Resilience and Sustainable Economic Recovery*” which emphasised on growth stimulation and macroeconomic stability and; promotion of productive oriented investment and productivity, without losing focus on fiscal responsibility. Although there are considerable significant improvements in terms of the economic trajectory of the country, there are still some gaps which require redress for the attainment of the desired economic growth and development in Zimbabwe.

Budget Performance: The MYB did not propose any supplementary budget to the 2021 enacted budgets. The original expenditure projection of ZWL429.3 billion has remained unchanged. For the first 6 months of 2021, a total of ZWL189.8 billion was expended, translating to approximately 44.2% budget utilisation for the first half of the year. There is a positive revenue outturn of ZWL198.2 billion thus there is a positive budget balance, signifying progress in attaining fiscal discipline. On revenue, the tax revenue accounts for the 96% of the total revenue collected during the period under review. It is important to note that USD700 million has been collected during the period under review signifying improvements in foreign currency collections. From another perspective, this also signal re-dollarization of the economy. It is undoubted that USD\$ is gradually becoming more active currency in the economy. On the economic performance outlook, there is optimism as the country is projecting 7.8% against the initial projection of 7.4% after 2 years of negative growth in 2019 and 2020. The projection has been largely informed by bumper harvest in agriculture especially on crops such as maize, tobacco and cotton as well as improvements on global commodity prices. The projected growth is way above the SADC which is expected to register 2.9% growth in 2021.

Inflation Developments: There is considerable exchange rate stability and decline in annual inflation rates evidenced by a significant decline in inflation from 837.5% in July 2020 to 106.6% in June 2021. Despite the Statutory Instrument 127 of 2021 which was introduced to foster discipline in the market and safeguard the stability, the parallel market remains active and a significant determinant of exchange rate and inflation in Zimbabwe. The real sector players continue to peg commodity prices against parallel market rate and this has a bearing in terms of the sustainability of lower and stable exchange rates in the country.

Annual Inflation Outlook



Sector Growth Trajectory: The agriculture sector growth which is now projected to register a 34% growth in 2021 as opposed to the initial projection of 11%, which signifies a serious overperformance of the sector. However, it is a cause for concern that only one sector is seemingly becoming the anchor of the economy. The agriculture sector is prone to natural phenomenon and this undermines the sustainability of the growth to be achieved. It is worrying that the mining sector growth projection has been revised downwards from the initial projection of 11% to 2%. The underperformance of the sector is questionable and worrisome considering the role of mining sector in Zimbabwe. The compensation of employees constitutes 47% of the total expenditure for the 6 months, and only 11% accounts for the social benefits towards cushioning of the vulnerable as part of mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2021 Revised GDP Growth Rate

	2018	2019	2020	2021 Initial Proj	2021Rev Proj
Agriculture, Hunting and Fishing and forestry	18.3	-17.8	4.2	11.3	34.0
Mining and quarrying	8.7	-12.4	-9.0	11.0	2.0
Manufacturing	1.3	-8.7	-3.2	6.5	7.0
Electricity	-1.1	-19.2	-16.5	18.8	13.9
Construction	2	-12.4	2.5	7.2	7.7
Wholesale and retail trade	5.3	-4.1	-4.8	5.7	5.1
Transportation and storage	2.3	-4	-2.2	7.1	4.9
Accommodation and food service activities	1.1	-8.6	-56.3	5.7	6.4
Information and communication	2.8	11.3	18.7	7.1	5.1
Financial and insurance activities	6.5	-5.2	2.0	6.2	4.5
Real estate activities	3.2	-1.2	-5.9	4.5	1.1
Public administration	-5	1.5	-1.3	2.5	2.6
Education	-4.7	0.9	-9.3	12.7	5.2
Human health and social work activities	0.3	2.7	3.7	2	5.7
Other Services	-3	5.7	2.7	4.7	-2.8
GDP at Market Prices	4.8	-6.0	-4.1	7.4	7.8

Vote Appropriations: There are three major changes to the vote appropriations in the 2021 MYB. Firstly, the allocation to the MoFED has significantly dropped from 6.7% down to 4.9% allocation to the total budget. The allocation for the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water, Fisheries and Rural Resettlement was increased from 10.8% to 12% whilst Health and Child Care allocation was increased slightly from 12.7% to 13%. Though commendable, it was anticipated that the allocation for social development should have been increased in light of the increased vulnerabilities presented by the third wave of COVID19 pandemic. Very low budget utilisation particularly for the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare and the MoHCC which stands at 29% and 17% respectively is unjustifiable looking at the deplorable state of the health sector amid devastating COVID19 pandemic and increased vulnerabilities in communities with majority of people wallowing in extreme poverty trap.

In the spirit of ensuring transparency and accountability in the use of public resources, it is of great importance that the MYB continue to improve on the comprehensiveness of information contained in the midterm review. It is necessary for citizens to be informed about all expenditures in order to demand social accountability in the use of public resources. It is commendable that the government has unveiled expenditure, revenue, debt and other critical information but more importantly, the MYB should also provide information on the resources which were disbursed to the intended beneficiaries. Ideally the national budget is meant to translate to the realization of social and economic rights of citizens especially the most vulnerable. The failure to provide expenditure information takes away the right of citizens and permanent residents of Zimbabwe to information guaranteed by section 62 of the constitution of Zimbabwe. This is a summary analysis, NANGO is currently working on a detailed analysis which shall be shared publicly in the near future. Watch Out for this!!

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The Role of Civil Society Organisations in the Electoral Cycle Amid COVID-19.



Zimbabwe, like many other countries has been holding elections since pre- and post-independence. This to some extent demonstrate the commitment to prove that the nation is keen to conform to the principles of democracy and good governance. The tenets of a democracy provides that election should ensure the rights of citizens to willingly and fully participate in the electoral process within a free, fair and credible environment. Critics to the election mode for Zimbabwe both locally and internationally have highlighted that we are a country that has always been in an election's mode. This results in the relegation of the core functions of government of facilitating development and ensuring progressive realization of fundamental citizens' rights. Distribution of factors of production, food handouts, empowerment programmes have been alleged to have been executed on party lines than humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. This is believed to have compromised the credibility of electoral processes.

Zimbabwe holds elections after every five years and the current regime of elections are harmonized. The last harmonized elections were conducted in 2018. These were generally regarded as peaceful elections but had others irregularities that were highlighted. Traditionally, elections were one of the major drivers of conflict and violence. Several initiatives were done by CSOs and other stakeholders to lobby and influence the process to be violent free.

Various stakeholders have critical and unique roles to contribute during the electoral process. Participating

political parties have a role to field in and campaign for their candidates at the same time restraining their supports that they will not get involved in violence. Citizens have a role to choose and vote for their preferred candidates as well as ensuring that they will not be influenced to infringe on the freedoms and rights for others citizens. The media must play a responsible role in reporting on the election and informing the electorate about the election. The key player in the electoral process is the Zimbabwe Elections Commission (ZEC) which has the primary responsibility of ensuring the preparation, conduct, supervise and execution of elections. CSOs play a watchdog role of making sure that the rights of citizens are upheld and honored at every stage of the electoral process as well as offering voter education. The importance of stake-holder engagement in the electoral process is key to ensuring that elections are held in a peaceful, free, fair environment. This is paramount to have credible elections. Zimbabwe is going for elections in 2023 and different stakeholders have started preparing for the elections. As such, it is key to facilitate their work by ensuring open and enabling environment.

Civil Society Organisations who are members of the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), Election Resource Centre (ERC), Zimbabwe NGO Forum and NANGO have been playing pivotal roles complimenting each other in enhancing the contribution of CSOs around the election's process. NANGO coordinates efforts aimed at promoting the inclusion, equal treatment, and participation in democratic governance by CSOs in Zimbabwe to ensure sustainable peace and economic development at the same time ensuring that No One is Left Behind. Through this, NANGO has been and continues to play an oversight, monitoring, advocacy and lobby roles on government and quasi government institutions to guarantee fulfilment of their obligations to promote a democratic society as enshrined in regional and international instruments and protocols ratified by Zimbabwe. Some of them include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights whose article 21 (3) particularly states that:

“The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures”.

The work of NANGO in relation to the 30 July 2018 harmonised elections were in five phases. The first phase involved setting up of policy engagement platforms to facilitate behaviour and attitude change, that put in place a community and national level infrastructure for peace. At the same time non-state actors interacted with key stakeholders such as political party leaders, independent commissions, development partners, traditional leaders, police amongst others.

The second phase involved CSO capacity building initiatives, on conflict prevention, management, resolution and transformation, voter education and election observation. The third phase involved dissemination of information on elections through various media platforms. The fourth phase monitored other stakeholders' execution of their roles in the electoral process such as the independent commissions, media, political parties, CSOs and security sector. This work led to the fifth phase of election observation and reporting.

The principles of democracy are enshrined under Article 2(1) of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance and seeks to “Promote adherence, by each State Party, to the universal values and principles of democracy and respect for human rights.” Section 3 (2) (f)

of the Constitution of Zimbabwe reposes the authority to govern in the people of Zimbabwe. In addition, section 117 grants the legislature the power “... to make laws for the peace, order and good governance of Zimbabwe”. Given such fertile ground for the growth of democracy, it informs and spurs CSOs to effectively programme and make sure that the principles of democracy in particular the respect for the rule of law, transparency, accountability, citizen participation and respect for human rights are adhered to.

Observations from the previous elections reveal that there are gaps in promoting democracy and governance especially for marginalised groups. In this view, new strategic partnerships are very critical to support movement building on democracy and governance; and NANGO believe that not only will it learn and benefit from the collaboration and partnerships but it will yield results in areas of coordination, capacity building, advocacy and networking for the organisation.

COVID-19 has changed the way of life and that also looks at how elections can be carried out. Thus, the upcoming elections need to follow a similar method that protects the public from getting infections during elections. The CSOs will be ready to assist Government and provide models that can enhance the election process even during such environment. In the end the process must encompass 3 pillars namely be Inclusive (leaving no one behind), Peaceful and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The Covid-19 pandemic has, of recent, hit hard on Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and NANGO members in particular. We lost cadres who were playing a key role in enhancing the development work and leadership of CSOs. We lost Senator Rejoice Timire and Ms Vimbai Nhutsve-Musengi among others during the week. We continue expressing our heartfelt condolences to all those involved in this time of sorrow and grief. MAY THE DEPARTED REST IN PEACE. Indeed, the sector is becoming poorer by each passing day.



Residents' associations hail Freedom of Information Act

Residents across Zimbabwe have not been participating in council meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic in a situation that has deprived them an opportunity to have a say in decisions made by their representatives in councils.



The Zimbabwe National Organizations of Residents Associations Trust has applauded the newly enacted Freedom of Information Act as a positive move for social cohesion amid the country's economic challenges. The Freedom of Information Act replaced Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

In an interview, ZNOART's Mashonaland West provincial chairperson Liberty Chitiya said the Act will help rebuild trust between public institutions and general citizens. "We applaud government for acknowledging the realities and

benefits of decentralization to all residents in the country. Enactment of Freedom of Information Act is progressive, commendable and welcome development of our nation.

"Some councils and municipalities are failing to be transparent on devolution projects. The law is coming on the backdrop of increased clamor calls for devolution which are hinged upon the constitution of Zimbabwe," he said.

Chitiya said as a public organization that believes in accountability, they are geared to use the new law to fully lobby for devolution of urban residents concerns such as best service provision and access to water as a human right. "We will be lobbying for establishment of residents for a to express their concerns with service providers in open discussions that take everyone aboard on issues that affect them as citizens," he said.

Chitiya said although transparency should be part of how councils float and award tenders meant to improve service delivery, reality on the ground shows a different scenario. "The so-called transparency on tenders of services delivery equipment is not visible to residents who feel short-changed without explanation on such shortcomings," he said.

Chitiya bemoaned the COVID-19 pandemic that has “disengaged” residents who are failing to attend full council meetings. “Two things emerge, firstly, residents need to participate in processes to enhance transparency, be able to critique council processes and participate in decision making which affects their daily lives. “Secondly, there is need for councils to engage residents in other ways especially during these trying times of COVID where physical meetings are minimal. In the end, transparency has become relative but as ZNOART we fight in the resident's corner because no town or city can say that they are using 70 percent of their revenue towards salaries and having 30 percent towards service delivery.”

“As ZNOART, we demand transparent use of service levies so that services reach the rate payers according to the 30:70 rule. Most towns and cities lack strong engagement with its ratepayers, resulting in non-transparent use of revenue,” he said.

The Freedom of Information Act was launched during a virtual meeting last week.

The programme was implemented by Tag a Life International (TaLi) and supported by Fojo Media Institute, International Media Support with funding from Swedish Embassy in Zimbabwe.

Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services Minister Monica Mutsvangwa challenged ordinary citizens to take advantage of the new law that was signed late last year. “The new law provides for the obligation on entities to have a written information disclosure policy. The law also provides for the provision of information in a language requested by the applicant. “These practical provisions if well-resourced and are made know to the citizens and journalists, will ensure that citizens enjoy their constitutional freedoms and rights to information, and freedom of expression,” she said.

TaLi Director, Nyaradzai Mashayamombe said right to information is critical to the general public. “The Act empowers citizens on their right to information,” she said.

Mashayamombe said Zimbabwean citizens including women, girls and the vulnerable have a right to understand how council uses public resources without hindrance. She said the Act helps in the right of access to information in accordance with the constitution to establish voluntary and mandatory mechanisms giving effect to the rights. “This Act is there to promote transparency, accountability and effective governance by taking steps necessary to educate or inform the public of their rights in terms of the act. “It ensures that appropriate assistance is afforded to members of the public seeking to exercise their right of access to information in order to facilitate the exercise of the right,” she said.

ZNOART is centered on representing and promoting the interests of all residents in Zimbabwe. It also advocates for equal opportunities, aspirations and rights of all classes of residents thereby seeking to improve conditions of residents in towns and districts. The Trust aims at working in partnership with councils, associations and other agencies to lobby for participation in the making of policies directly and indirectly. ZNOART membership is across Zimbabwe including urban, municipalities and local authorities.

Nhau Mangirazi
Business Writer



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Analysis of the policy, legal and institutional frameworks in Zimbabwe

Is Zimbabwe advancing instruments in pursuit of combatting climate change and environmental protection

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts



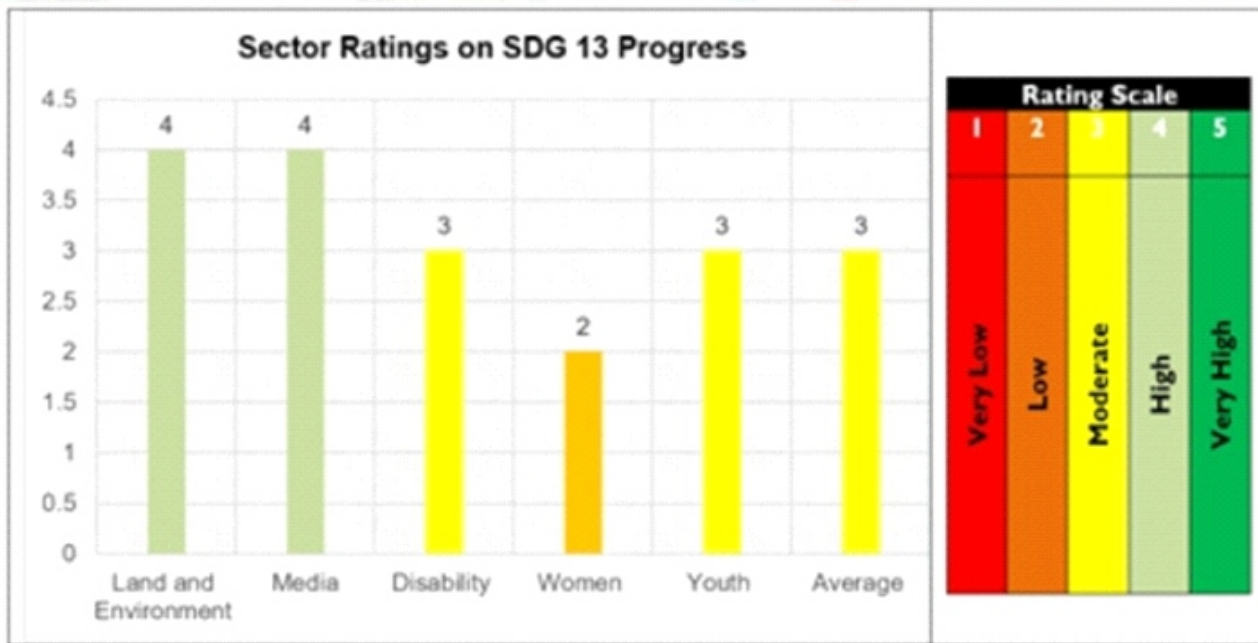
Goal 13 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) seeks to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. The legal and policy framework for the goal is in place. Section 73 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe provides for environmental fundamental rights and freedoms. Zimbabwe has ratified the Paris Agreement on climate change. The country has a National Climate Policy which aims to enable Zimbabwe to establish the legal structures to regulate businesses in climate-related matters, and enable them to reduce their greenhouse gases emissions. The Policy further focuses on adaptation with regard to rural communities and agriculture. Other policies include the National Child Friendly Climate Policy, Renewable Energy Policy, the Forest Policy and other strategies aimed at achieving climate resilience and sustainable development. These include the Agriculture Manual for Agriculture Education in Zimbabwe, National Climate Change Response Strategy, National Environmental Policy and Strategies and National Climate Change Learning Strategy. The Government developed the long term Low Greenhouse Gas Emission Development Strategy (LEDS), for the period 2020-2050, in response to the global climate change crisis. The Climate Smart Agriculture policy will help in the adaptation to climate change.

Government has established the Department of Climate Change Management. The Department is mandated with promoting best practices in climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies to enhance the country's response and

capacity to manage the impacts of climate change. There are also other several functional agencies of government taking an active role in delivering on mandates related to climate change within the government. Some progress in implementation of policies and strategies has been noted. For instance, the Integrated Climate Risk Management for Food Security and Livelihoods in Zimbabwe Focusing on Masvingo and Rushinga Districts from the Green Climate Fund. The project is being implemented by the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water and Rural Resettlement together with World Food Program (WFP) Zimbabwe. The project will strengthen national and community adaptation based on climate forecasts and information. Several solar plants and projects have also been rolled out in the country which are contributing electricity to the national grid. The National Cleanup Campaign was also launched by the President in December 2018 is another important milestone bringing together all stakeholders in cleaning up the environment.

Review of the CSOs Perception on progress made since 2017 VNR Figure 1 illustrates the CSO's rating of the progress in taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts since the 2017 VNR. The ratings were provided using the scale of 5 adopted from the People's Score Card. Five NANGO sectors responded to the questionnaire that is women, media, youth, land and environment; and disability sectors. The scores provided by the sectors are graphically presented in Figure 15. The key to the ratings and colour codes are provided in Figure 1.



Figure 1: CSOs Rating of the progress made in achieving the SDGs

Source: Authors Computation from the consolidated People's Score Cards

As shown in Figure 1, the disability and youth ranked the progress made in taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts at 3 out of 5, signifying moderate and considerable progress made since 2017 VNR. On a positive note, the land and environment and media sector ranked the goal at 4 out of 5. The women sector perceived low progress in taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. The overall score given for the goal was 3 out of 5 which means there is moderate progress being made in implementing policies, projects and interventions aimed at taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

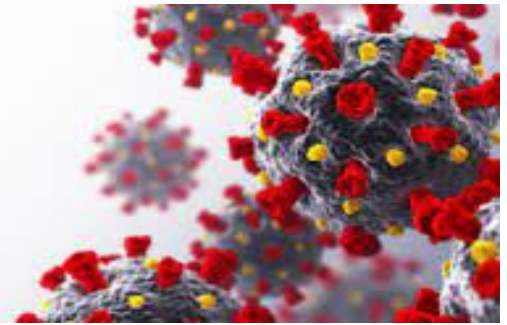
The challenges and gaps which CSOs identified for improvement and strengthening are;

- Although there are legal and policy framework and strong institutional arrangements, the main challenge is on the financing of those plans.
- There is lack of disability framework and limited participation by PWDs in climate change related programs.
- Low awareness on climate change issues and information including policies not in accessible formats such as language and disability friendly. However, some CSOs are plugging the gap with organizations such as the Green Governance Zimbabwe cascading information within the Manicaland Province.
- COVID-19 disrupted and slowed progress in resettlement, accessing social protection of climate change victims e.g., Cyclone Idai victims

Recommendations for Improvements and Strengthening

- Government has done well in development of relevant policies e.g., National Renewable Energy Policy, Biofuels Policy. However, these now need to be supported by budgetary allocation so that renewable energy is taken to a higher level than the current levels.
- The need to use traditional methods of preserving water.
- There is need for law enforcement on gold panners.
- Focus should be put towards afforestation and concentrate on indigenous trees.
- Educate people on climate change using vernacular.
- There is need for climate resistant infrastructure

Gender-Based Violence and the covid-19 pandemic



The advent of the covid-19 pandemic has brought untold suffering to the world and much more to the developing world where they have to cope with poor health facilities and the effects it has on the livelihoods of the general citizenry. The covid-19 pandemic has led to a significant increase in restrictions on the freedom of movement of people in the country and worrisome reports on the misuse of emergency measures to further erode human rights and the rule of law. This has led to an adverse impact on civic space and the ability of communities and individuals to exercise their right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression.

Women continue to bear the brunt of harassment and attacks both on and offline. Some women activists have been subjected to abuse. The prospects of a continued lockdown raise serious concerns over how these protection gaps and human rights restrictions will be addressed. CSOs hope that post-pandemic recovery will lead to an expansion of rights and participation of women in public affairs so that we are more resilient to future such crises.

While it is too early for comprehensive data, there are already many deeply concerning reports of increased violence against women around the world, with surges being reported in many cases of upwards of 25% in countries with reporting systems in place. In Zimbabwe CSOs, media houses and activists reported through online newspapers and social media that the number of GBV cases increased significantly during lockdown. GBV service providers in Zimbabwe have seen an increase in reported GBV cases,

including psychological, physical, sexual and economic forms of violence.

['SAFEs analysis of GBV data](#) between March and May 2020 found that intimate partner violence (IPV) was the most frequently reported form of GBV as 69.5% of identifiable perpetrators were intimate partners. The COVID-19 lockdown has also exposed women and girls to violence when accessing services, including at water collection points. The perpetrators include men using the services, service providers who demand sex in exchange for water, as well as law enforcement officers monitoring the lockdown. This is one of numerous examples of violence by law enforcement agents, who are also responsible for attacks on women alleged to be 'defying' lockdown restrictions and women engaging in peaceful protests.

It is noteworthy that one of the greatest setbacks in the fight against GBV is non-publicity of real time statistics on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) which in-turn negatively impacts on evidence-based policy/national response to GBV. In light of the aforementioned, most organisations that are in GBV programming await for statistics from other organisations like Musasa to base their response to GBV. The level of difficulty in getting the statistics from Victim Friendly Unit sections do not only prove poor prioritization of the phenomena but the extent to which organisations and various stakeholders encounter in the fight for gender justice. Indeed, there is need to relook at the national data management systems that are used as a benchmark to GBV response during the pandemic.

Alongside the increase in numbers, violence against women is taking on new complexity with exposure to Covid-19 being used as a threat. The inability of women to call for help or escape is being exploited by abusers. Women risk being thrown out on the street with nowhere to go. At the same time support services are struggling for example judicial, police and health services which are supposed to be the first responders for women are overwhelmed. Some have shifted priorities or are otherwise unable to help. Civil society organizations are affected by lockdown or reallocation of resources. Some domestic violence shelters are full others

have had to close.

Women and girls who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination were already at higher risk of violence, which COVID-19 is exacerbating. Emerging evidence in Zimbabwe, or regionally, indicates that poor women, women in rural areas, women and girls with disabilities, adolescent girls, older women, women and girls with HIV, migrant women and women in quarantine facilities, and refugee women are at heightened risk of violence. However, more research is needed that looks at their experiences of violence during the pandemic.

URBAN POVERTY A DESPAIR TO ZIMBABWEAN COMMUNITY



The Government of Zimbabwe has worked hard in trying to alleviate poverty in Zimbabwe with the help of various Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). However, most projects have mainly targeted the rural communities and have often ignored the urban communities. Therefore, the imbalance has caused severe despair, and urban poverty has taken a huge turmoil, affecting the day-to-day lives of people.

Urban poverty has been on the increase due to economic crisis which have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Disruptions caused by the pandemic have had adverse effects in living standards and poverty levels. The World Bank in Zimbabwe reported that the pandemic and its impacts disrupted livelihoods, especially in urban areas,

and added 1.3 million to the extreme poor. Estimates suggest the number of extreme poor reached 7.9 million in 2020—almost 49% of the population. Surveys indicate that nearly 500,000 households have at least one member who lost their job in 2020, causing many to fall into poverty and worsening the plight of the existing poor.

Urban households suffered most economically. Ninety percent of nonfarm businesses, which skew toward urban areas, indicated that they faced a drop in revenue or did not receive any revenue at all (ZIMSTAT Rapid PICES Phone Survey of July 2020). Wage earners in urban areas and the extreme poor were disproportionately affected by the pandemic, as their pay was either cut or not received at all. Thus, this has furthered urban poverty in Zimbabwe and not much has been done to help the urban community.

However, it cannot be ignored that there are some CSOs who have been working with different urban communities, though the effort has not been the same as compared to the one applied in the rural communities. The results of urban poverty have affected people of all age groups from the youngest to the old aged people. This has been evidenced by an increase in child labour. Children above five years old are seen in the streets begging for a living or vending in the streets for a living.

There is also a rise in prostitution as young girls sell sex for a living and are recruited into sex work, not by choice but as a way to provide for themselves and their families. In some cities where there are mining activities, there are many school dropouts where young and able bodied students resort to artisanal mining to provide for their families, despite the risks and consequences this may have.

Urban poverty has been devastating in Zimbabwe to an extent that almost everyone has become a vendor, or “hustler”. It has also led to increased criminal activities including drug abuse. Though these may not be used as justifications, poverty has a part to play in driving the rate of immorality. This has also been fuelled by the level of unemployment and levels of income that is being attained by formal and informal workers.

Malnutrition has also been an issue in children, affecting their health as well as their growth. Some Primary schools have been acting towards feeding the children at Primary levels with the help of the related Organisations, providing them with porridge or sadza and beans, to help boost their nutritional health. This seems to have been difficult due to COVID-19 which has led to school closures. One can imagine how these kids are surviving without all these programmes that were being facilitated, trying to curb this related issue.

The issue of malnutrition cannot only be limited to children

but also to the elderly, where AID has been mainly focusing on rural communities yet the urban communities are suffering equally as the former. Though some Organisations are working to address the issue of poverty in the urban areas, they have not yet managed to cover much ground in addressing this issue as much as the efforts that are put in the rural communities.

Most young girls in urban communities have been lured into commercialising sex, due to the level of poverty. It is so saddening that most business people and other people who can afford to assist these girls are also participating in this immoral act. This issue has not only been limited to the people who are staying at homes but includes school goers as well. Such acts have been seen in High Schools, Colleges and Universities. Students exchanging sex with their school needs such as fees, food among others. “Blessers” taking care of students needs in exchange for sex. This has disrupted social cohesion and led to moral decadents due to the push factors, where everyone focuses on survival while ignoring the risks and consequences. The issue of commercialising sex is no longer gender affiliated but applies to both young men and women.

Most people have resorted to vending as mentioned above. This has led to a conflict between the Government and the public. Some vendors have resorted to the use of illegal sites to sell their products, where they are not regulated. The goods are illegally imported since it is a cheaper way to attain them and make a living, for profit-making. People have normalised corruption and unregulated trading as a way of survival. A lot of conning has been happening, the idea of competing for survival removing our collective way of living, where we have to live for each other. The African proverb “*Ubuntu ngubuntu ngabantu*” notion no longer exists, as people compete and strive for survival.

Therefore, there is a need to address urban poverty, before it further impact on the lives of the people.

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