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National Development Strategy 2

NDS2

POLICY PAPER

Towards an Inclusive, Resilient & Transformative Zimbabwe (2026-2030)

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Acronyms

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EU	European Union
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GPEDC	Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation
ICT	Information Communication Technology
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
NANGO	National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations
NAYO	National Association of Youth Organisations
NDS1	National Development Strategy 1
NDS2	National Development Strategy 2
OPC	Office of the President and Cabinet
RISDP	Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan
PVO	Private Voluntary Organisations Act
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TSP	Transitional Stabilization Programme
UHC	Universal Health Coverage
ZIMASSET	Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation

Executive Summary

The National Development Strategy 2 (NDS2: 2026–2030) represents Zimbabwe's pivotal opportunity to transition from volatile, extractive, and exclusionary growth pathways toward an inclusive, resilient, and transformative development model aligned with Vision 2030, the SDGs, AU Agenda 2063, and SADC RISDP. Building on the foundations of NDS1 while addressing its shortcomings, NDS2 must confront persistent macroeconomic fragility marked by high debt, inflation volatility, and limited fiscal space; entrenched poverty, inequality, and youth unemployment; weak governance and accountability; and heightened climate vulnerability. Citizens' voices, as captured through consultations, stress a few non-negotiables that demand prioritization, macroeconomic stability with single-digit inflation and sustainable debt, broad-based and equitable economic transformation anchored in gender justice, job creation, and youth empowerment, investment in infrastructure and climate-smart food systems, and robust social protection systems that leave no one behind. Critical to delivery is institutional reform, strengthening governance, transparency, anti-corruption measures, and devolved resource allocation to provinces, combined with strategic financing innovations such as blended finance, SDG bonds, and gender-lens procurement. Streamlined policy actions cluster around five thematic priorities: (i) stabilizing the economy and restoring fiscal credibility; (ii) investing in human capital, health, and education to drive a knowledge-based economy; (iii) promoting equity, gender equality, and youth empowerment as engines of productivity and governance renewal; (iv) building climate resilience and climate-smart infrastructure to safeguard livelihoods; and (v) entrenching strong governance, accountability, and inclusive citizen participation through co-creation and civic engagement. Lessons from Rwanda, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Tunisia underscore that sustained stability, private sector dynamism, strategic regional integration, and strong institutions are indispensable for tangible progress. Ultimately, NDS2's success hinges not on visionary plans alone but on their consistent implementation through real-time monitoring, citizen monitoring, and enforceable accountability structures. The immediate next steps must focus on operationalizing inclusive provincial co-creation councils, securing financing through innovative instruments and debt resolution, embedding citizen-led monitoring into delivery systems, and sequencing reforms that balance stabilization with social protection. Pursuing this coherent, inclusive, and results-driven agenda, Zimbabwe can decisively align national ambition with citizen priorities and continental frameworks, translating its aspirations into resilient, equitable, and transformative progress by 2030.

1 Introduction

The Imperative for NDS2 – Charting Zimbabwe's Transformative Path

Zimbabwe stands at a defining crossroads in its national development journey. As the National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1: 2021-2025) reaches its lapse in December 2025, the Government of Zimbabwe put in place a framework to create a successor NDS2 (2026-2030). This next phase emerges against a backdrop of persistent and complex challenges that demand urgent, transformative solutions. Lingering macroeconomic volatility, characterized by hyperinflation with year on year peaking at 654% in August 2020[1]and a public debt burden reaching 47.1[2] of GDP in 2025, continues to constrain fiscal space and undermine sustainable growth. Critical social pressures persist, notably youth unemployment at a staggering 41%[3] and a debt servicing obligation consuming 42% of national revenue, severely limiting investments in human capital and social services. The operational environment for civic participation faces constraints, exemplified by legislation such as the Private Voluntary Organisations Amendment Act 2025, potentially hindering the realisation of the **'whole-of-society'** approach to inform National Development Planning. This occurs despite Section 13 of the Zimbabwean Constitution providing a robust foundation for inclusive and broad-based citizen participation in shaping national development planning.

INDS2 presents an unparalleled opportunity to build on the gains achieved under NDS1. It is the pivotal strategy designed to propel Zimbabwe decisively towards achieving its Vision 2030 of becoming an empowered and prosperous upper-middle-income society. Success hinges on learning from the implementation gaps identified in NDS1 and its predecessors such as Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation(ZIMASSET) and the Transitional Stabilization Programme (TSP), while decisively addressing systemic weaknesses in macroeconomic stability, civic participation, institutional capacity, and climate resilience. This paper also gleans on the Structured Dialogue on Arrears Clearance and Debt Resolution Process that has provided a multi-stakeholder dialogue platform to address some of Zimbabwe's pressing challenges particularly economic, governance and land reform issues. In addition, NDS2 must be intrinsically aligned with global and regional commitments such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the African Union's Agenda 2063, and the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020-2030 to ensure Zimbabwe's development trajectory contributes to and benefits from integrated continental and global progress.

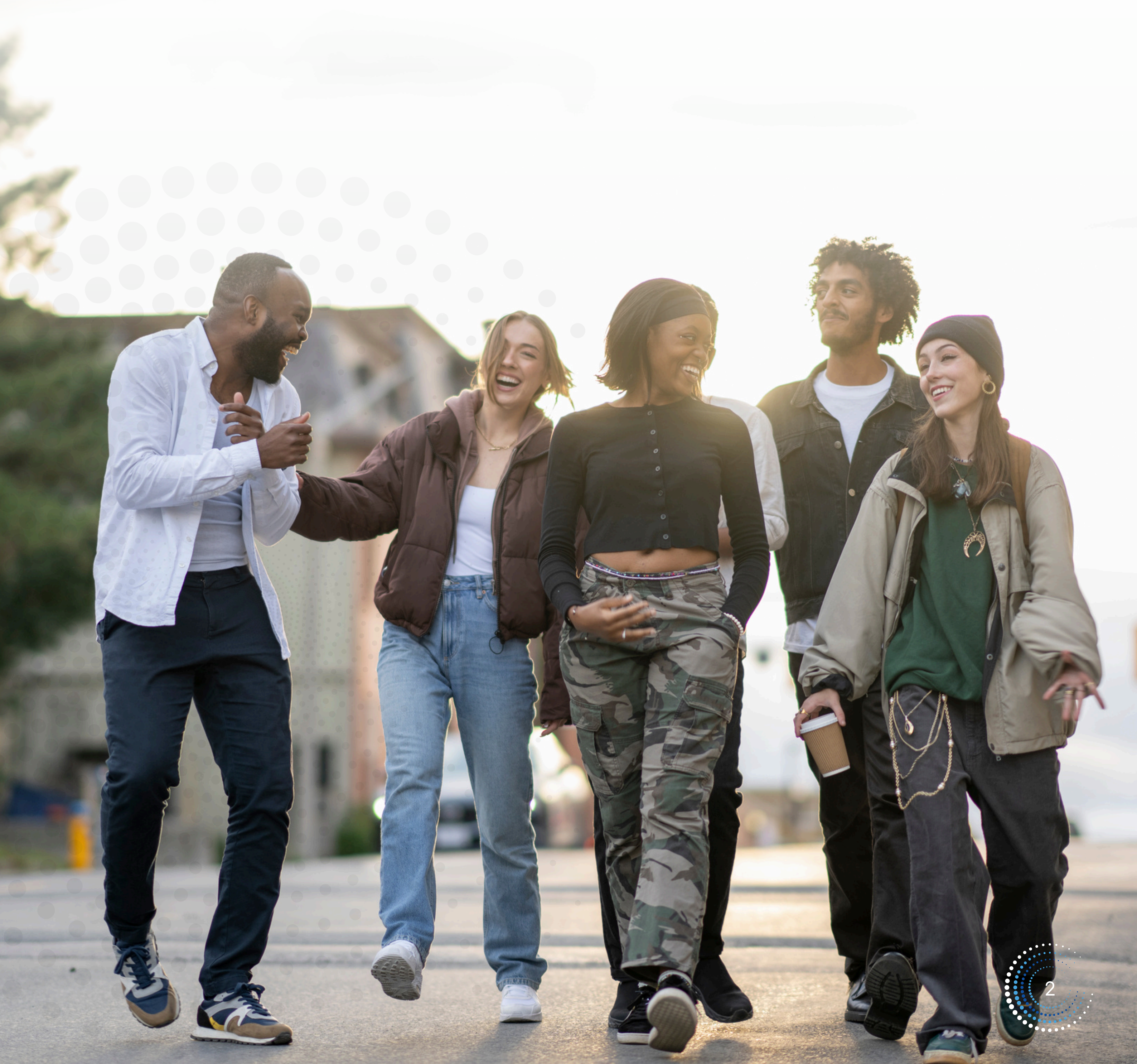
Youth unemployment remains alarmingly high at 41%, reflecting deep structural challenges in the economy.

[1] International Monetary Fund (IMF) Zimbabwe Inflation
[2] https://zimtreasury.co.zw/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Public-Debt-Report-to-Parliament-ZWE.pdf
[3] Afrobarometer. (2023). Young Zimbabweans see their government as falling short on employment and the economy. https://www.afrobarometer.org/publication/ad744-young-zimbabweans-see-their-government-as-falling-short-on-employment-and-the-economy/

Key to this alignment is ensuring the 10 priority areas developed by the Government leverage effective implementation architecture, good governance, and an enabling environment for businesses, innovation, and partnerships. The results from the Zimbabwe 4th Monitoring Round of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) (2023-2026) offer critical insights into areas that need strengthening to improve the country's social, economic, and political outlook beyond 2025.

It is within this critical context that NDS2 Policy Paper, commissioned under the EU-funded **'Action to Empower NGOs for Effective and Inclusive Governance and Development in Zimbabwe'** ENERGIZE Action and implemented by NAYO and NANGO is timely.

NAYO and NANGO are committed to co-creating an inclusive, actionable, and resilient NDS2 framework that leverages Zimbabwe's immense human and natural capital, corrects past implementation failures, and decisively accelerates inclusive growth, firmly positioning the nation on the path to realizing Vision 2030 while fulfilling its regional and global obligations. This policy paper aims to be the definitive evidence-based guide for Zimbabwe's transformative leap towards an upper-middle-income society by 2030.



2 Background and Situational Analysis

Debt Pressure

Public debt stands at 84% of GDP, limiting fiscal flexibility.

84%

Currency Instability

A 20% parallel market premium weakens economic confidence.

20%

Food Insecurity

7.9 million people are food insecure after the 2024 El Niño drought.

7.9m

Youth Unemployment

85% of youth are jobless or trapped in informal work.

85%

Zimbabwe faces deep-seated challenges across multiple dimensions. Macroeconomic fragility persists with public debt standing at 84% of GDP, a parallel currency premium of 20% recorded in the first quarter of 2025, and continued inflation volatility undermining fiscal planning and stability. Poverty and inequality remain acute, with 7.9 million people food insecure following the 2024 El Niño drought. Women own less than 20% of land and continue to face a 37% gender pay gap. Youth are especially excluded, with unemployment estimated at 85% and most employed young people working in the informal sector. Governance deficits also weaken national resilience. Provinces and Local Governments continue to receive less than 5% of national budgets despite growing demands for decentralization. Zimbabwe ranked 158 out of 180 on the Corruption Perceptions Index which reflects serious governance weaknesses. Climate vulnerability further compounds these challenges with the 2024 drought worsening food insecurity and artisanal mining leading to mercury contamination levels eight times above safe thresholds. These systemic challenges need to be comprehensively addressed through NDS2 and rectify past development failures. Stability, inclusivity, resilience, and accountable governance must therefore form the core of the new strategy.

Zimbabwe's youth face intersecting structural challenges that demand explicit attention within NDS2 if their demographic weight is to translate into a development dividend. High youth unemployment and underemployment, coupled with skills mismatches, leave many graduates trapped in the informal sector. Limited access to finance, land, and productive assets perpetuates exclusion, while negative societal perceptions portray youth more as 'drug users' than drivers of innovation. Weak representation in decision-making further marginalizes their voice, despite the AU Youth Charter and Agenda 2063 commitments to youth agency. Rising mental health stressors, drug use, and migration pressures reflect not only economic frustrations but also governance disillusionment. Embedding youth issues in NDS2 requires a structural inclusion through innovation hubs, digital economy integration, vocational skilling, equitable land access, and guaranteed political participation which has the potential to transform Zimbabwe's youth from perceived burdens into recognized engines of productivity, governance renewal, and regional integration.

Table 1: Situational Analysis: Zimbabwe's Development Landscape

Development Dimension	Key Challenge	Metric & Reference
	Macroeconomic Stressors	
Debt Distress	High debt service burden limiting fiscal space	42% of government revenue consumed by debt servicing (2024)
Currency Instability	Severe exchange rate misalignment	Parallel market premium at 300% (Q1 2025)
Economic Informalization	Limited formal employment opportunities	76% of workforce in precarious informal work (24% formal employment rate, 2024)
	Socioecological Challenges	
Climate Vulnerability	Drought-induced food insecurity	7.9 million people food insecure (2024 El Niño impact)
Gender Inequality	Asset and income disparities	Women's land ownership less than 20%; Gender pay gap at 37% (2024 national surveys)
Youth Exclusion	Economic marginalization and unemployment Hustling culture and brain drain	Over 85% youth unemployment while 67% of young people leave below the poverty datum line Over 60% employed youths are in the informal sector
	Governance Deficits	
Restricted Civic Space	Constrained civil society operations	PVO Act restricts CSO funding; CIVIC space monitor ranking 30/100 (repressed)
Devolution Stagnation	Limited provincial resource allocation	Provinces receive less than 5% of national budgets from budget appropriations (2024 fiscal allocation data)

3 Methodology

3.1 Data Collection and Analysis Methodology

This policy paper employed a mixed-methods approach to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of NDS1 – lesson's learned and citizen priorities- strategically integrating quantitative and qualitative techniques. Primary data collection commenced with structured surveys targeting 68 Civil Society Organizations and Community-Based Organizations (CSOs/CBOs) through both physical and online channels; these instruments utilized Likert-scaled questions to systematically quantify community perspectives on NDS1 implementation gaps and NDS2 priority recommendations thereof. Complementing this, semi-structured Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted with 26 purposively sampled stakeholders across eight government ministries, five provincial/local governance structures, five private sector representatives, and three academic institutions, 15 traders, 10 artisanal miners, guided by standardized protocols to ensure methodological consistency. Qualitative primary data was complemented by five Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted with CSO-affiliated participants representing different thematic areas. Secondary data analysis involved rigorous desk review of foundational documentation including the Constitution of Zimbabwe (Section 13), predecessor frameworks such as NDS1, the Regional Anti-corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Framework Annual Reporting Zimbabwe 2023/24 Report, NDS1 Mid Term Review, the Transitional Stabilisation Programme, and ZIMASSET, alongside sectoral strategies and international alignment tools like Zimbabwe's SDG Voluntary National Reviews and Agenda 2063.

3.2 Analytical Framework

Data analysis adhered to a triangulation protocol to cross-validate findings across sources and methods. Qualitative information from key informant interviews and document reviews was organized and coded in NVivo software, with attention to recurring themes under four areas: how well actions align with NDS2 and Vision 2030 goals, the practicality of implementation in terms of funding and institutional capacity, the extent to which gender and youth are included, and the integration of climate resilience. . The analysis was then compared with perception survey results through simple matrices, allowing the team to identify similarities and differences. Any inconsistencies were discussed as a group and clarified using additional background information.

3.3 Validation and Quality Assurance

To ensure findings withstand technical scrutiny and contextual relevance, a multi-stage validation process was implemented. Preliminary conclusions will be presented at a co-facilitated workshop with the NAYO Secretariat and sector experts, allowing stakeholders to identify knowledge gaps and assess interpretive accuracy. Draft recommendations will further be stress-tested against Zimbabwe's documented fiscal constraints (IMF Country Report No. 24/88) and climate vulnerability profiles (WFP Zimbabwe Emergency Report), with feedback systematically incorporated into the final policy paper. This participatory refinement mechanism guarantees that outputs remain evidence-based, operationally viable, and aligned with constitutional development principles.

4.0 Critical Retrospective: Lessons from Past Development Frameworks

The formulation of the National Development Strategy 2 (NDS2) demands a rigorous examination of Zimbabwe's recent development trajectory. Understanding the strengths, weaknesses, and outcomes of previous development plans such as the National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1), the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET), and the Transitional Stabilisation Programme (TSP) is fundamental to designing a strategy that avoids past pitfalls, builds on proven successes, and effectively charts a course towards an inclusive, resilient, and transformative Zimbabwe for 2026-2030. This critical retrospective distills essential lessons to inform NDS2's framework, implementation mechanisms, and monitoring systems, with verifiable references to authoritative sources.

4.1 National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1: 2021-2025): Foundations Laid, Implementation Strained

NDS1 represented a paradigm shift in Zimbabwe's development planning, establishing robust frameworks and sectoral priorities aligned with Vision 2030. However, implementation challenges undermined its transformative potential, revealing systemic weaknesses requiring urgent attention in NDS2. About **33.3** percent of survey respondents consulted during the development of this policy paper cited that NDS1 was the most effective development plan among the recent development frameworks such as TSP and ZIMASSET. It was noted that NDS1 has shown comparatively more structure and alignment with long-term development goals.

Respondents indicated that, ***"NDS1 carried the 'leave no one behind' mantra which tried to capture inclusivity but should be enforced beyond NDS1. However, other respondents indicated that implementation under NDS1 was visible, 100-day plan yielded action in many sectors, motivated action in frontline workers, improved oversight, accountability and transparency"*** The respondent's perspective in the formulation and implementation of the NDS1 are imperative in reinforcing understanding about performance of the NDS1.

4.1.1 Key Strengths: Institutional and Strategic Foundations

The transition from NDS1 (2021–2025) towards the design of NDS2should consolidate and scale up the institutional and strategic strengths that underpinned NDS1's implementation. The following institutional and strategic gains established under NDS1 should be considered.

1.Integrated Results-Based Management (IRBM) System

One of the notable strengths of NDS1 was the institutionalization of an Integrated Results-Based Management (IRBM) system, supported by UNDP frameworks, which significantly strengthened comprehensive monitoring mechanisms and enhanced oversight and accountability in policy execution (UNDP Zimbabwe, 2021). A key reform was the introduction of output-driven Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) across ministries, marking a significant departure from the traditional input-focused budgeting approach and enabling clearer tracking of results and better alignment of resources with measurable outcomes. In addition, the adoption of Program-Based Budgeting and the introduction of performance-based contracts for Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) reinforced a culture of responsibility for delivery. Importantly, NDS1 provided, for the first time, a national blueprint with a Results Framework to guide implementation, while also embracing the Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society approaches, which are commendable for fostering broad collaboration and inclusivity. However, a critical gap remained, as the effectiveness of IRBM and related reforms was undermined by inconsistent data collection and reporting across line ministries, sectors, and institutions, which limited timely evidence-based policy adjustments.

The TSP is fundamental to designing a strategy that avoids past pitfalls, builds on proven successes, and effectively charts a course towards an inclusive, resilient, and transformative Zimbabwe for 2026-2030

2.Clarity of 14 National Priorities

Another strength of NDS1 was the articulation of 14 clearly defined national priorities which provided a strategic focus and expanded on the 4 clusters established under ZIMASSET (Full NDS1 Document). The NDS1 further elaborated this approach by ensuring that each priority was accompanied by explicit outcomes, indicators, and thematic leadership, providing greater clarity for monitoring and policy alignment. This clarity ensured better alignment of policies and resources towards critical development areas. The continued practice of tabling the national budget alongside the Zimbabwe Investment Plan produced as a annex outlining key capital projects for that fiscal year is commendable as part of the broader efforts to improve transparency, planning, and prioritization of public investment in line with the country's development strategies.

Digital & Human Capital Progress (2023–2024)

Internet penetration

73.3%

(Target: 75.4%)

Education access

100+ new schools built

Impact: Targeted priorities boosted delivery under NDS1.

In the digital economy, internet penetration reached 73.3% in 2023, almost meeting the 75.4% target (POTRAZ Report). Human capital development was also advanced with over 100 schools constructed in 2024, improving access to education particularly in underserved areas (ZBC News). These achievements demonstrated how targeted priorities enhanced focus and efficiency in delivering tangible development outcomes under NDS1.

4.1.2 Critical Weaknesses and Implementation Challenges

Weaknesses faced by NDS1 and limited overall impact should be avoided in the design, implementation, monitoring and reporting of NDS2. Below are some of the critical pitfalls that the Government of Zimbabwe should be aware of in facilitating the NDS2 process.

1. Systemic Implementation Failures

Economic Instability:

97%

Public debt: 97% of GDP (legal limit: 70%)

DEBT

2%

Growth projection: Revised down to 2% (from 3.5%)

60%

Informal sector: Over 60% of the economy — limiting formal job creation

NDS1 implementation was constrained by persistent macroeconomic instability. Public debt reached 97% of GDP in 2023, breaching the legal threshold of 70% as reported in the Public Debt Bulletin. Inflationary pressures also persisted despite earlier gains under the TSP, with 2024 growth projections revised downward to 2% from the initial 3.5%. Furthermore, the informal sector continued to dominate, constituting over 60% of the economy, thereby limiting the creation of formal, sustainable jobs (World Economics).

Food security remained a critical weakness, with 7.6 million Zimbabweans—roughly half the population—classified as food insecure in 2024 (ZimLAC Report). Child stunting levels stood at 23.2%, missing the 17% NDS1 target and peaking at 29.7% in Matabeleland North, underscoring regional disparities in nutrition outcomes (ZimLAC Report). Industrial performance also lagged behind expectations. While manufacturing contributed 16.43% to GDP in 2023, masking uneven regional performance, mineral beneficiation significantly underperformed, with earnings of only \$4.6 billion against a \$10.7 billion target in 2022 (Sunday Mail).

NDS1's delivery was undermined by persistent fiscal shortfalls and resource misalignments. Key sectors remained underfunded with health receiving only 8.2% of the national budget in 2023 against the Abuja target of 15% (National Budget). Social protection spending averaged 2.8% of the budget between 2022 and 2025, falling short of the AU benchmark of 4.5% of GDP. Zimbabwe's debt overhang further constrained fiscal space with arrears and penalties constituting 77.7% of the $9.4 billion external debt stock, most of it accumulated since 2000 (ZIMCODD Factsheet).

2. Accountability and Transparency Deficits

Weak accountability mechanisms undermined NDS1 delivery. Only 2 out of the 16 NDS1 quarterly reports required under the framework were published between 2021 and 2023 (Kubatana PFMA Report). This highlights the gaps in regular, and transparent reporting as required by the NDS1 framework. Financial mismanagement compounded these shortcomings, with the Auditor General reporting $2.1 billion in unaudited expenditures for 2022. Furthermore, devolution funds intended to strengthen local service delivery were frequently misused; audits revealed that 67% of local authorities diverted allocations towards travel and perks instead of development priorities (OAG Audit **(year?)**

3. Entrenched Inequities

Structural inequities persisted throughout NDS1 particularly along gender lines. While women constitute 70% of smallholder farmers, they received less than 10% of agricultural financing which constrained their productivity and economic empowerment (UN Women, 2022).

Rural areas also suffered disproportionate neglect. Approximately 25% of rural households practiced open defecation in 2024, reflecting limited progress on sanitation and hygiene (ZimLAC Report). Similarly, less than 5% of irrigation investments were directed to communal areas, compared to 86% allocated to commercial farming zones, entrenching rural-urban disparities in agricultural resilience (FAO, 2023).

4. Global COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic severely hindered the implementation of Zimbabwe's NDS1 which led to significant setbacks in key economic and social indicators. The country's economy contracted by approximately 7.8% in 2020, exacerbated by droughts, inflation, and currency volatility[1]. According to the World Bank unemployment rates surged as a result of COVID-19 in Zimbabwe with 64% of respondents employed before mobility restrictions in March 2020, dropping to 51% by July 2020[2]. The informal sector, comprising about 76% of the workforce, was particularly affected, as lockdowns and restrictions led to widespread business closures and income losses. Additionally, nearly half of Zimbabweans faced extreme poverty in 2020 due to increased prices of basic necessities and economic contraction (UNICEF)[3]. These challenges underscore the profound impact of the pandemic on the nation's development trajectory and the achievement of NDS1 targets

5. Climate Vulnerability

NDS1 implementation was severely affected by climate risks. The 2023/24 agricultural season was hit by drought, resulting in an 18% maize deficit that left 2.7 million people in need of food assistance (WFP Report). Environmental sustainability challenges also emerged, particularly from artisanal mining. Mercury pollution in the Umguza River reached eight times above safe levels, threatening water safety and community livelihoods (NewsDay). These vulnerabilities highlighted the limited integration of climate resilience measures into NDS1's economic planning and resource management.

Table 2: Roots Causes of Implementation Failure

Challenge	Primary Cause	Evidence
Planning-Execution Gap	Fragmented inter-ministerial coordination	OECD Public Sector Review, 2022
Resource Misallocation	Political preference for high-visibility projects over initiatives promoting equity	$500M roads vs. $47M rural clinics (2022) (Budget Highlights)
Accountability Failure	Weak enforcement of reporting mandates	Only 12.5% of NDS1 quarterly reports published (Kubatana, 2023)
Climate Blindness	Weakintegration of climate risks into sector planning	NDS1 climate funding gap: $1.2bn (NCCRS, 2020)

Source: Primary Data Complied by Authors

4.2 Transitional Stabilisation Programme (TSP: 2018-2020): Stabilization Amid Persistent Structural Challenges

The Transitional Stabilisation Programme (TSP) achieved significant near-term economic stabilization through fiscal consolidation and monetary reforms which reduced inflation from 837% (July 2020) to 60.7% by December 2021 (Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, 2021). However, its crisis-response focus limited progress on deeper structural reforms. Public debt remained a challenge at $17.5 billion (Ministry of Finance, 2021), constraining fiscal space, while productivity barriers in agriculture and industry persisted. The TSP's necessary emphasis on immediate stabilization thus resulted in deferred attention to longer-term transformation imperatives.

5.2.1 Cross-Cutting Lessons: Foundational Priorities for NDS2

Zimbabwe's development experience highlights five critical considerations for enhancing NDS2 effectiveness:

01

Sustainable Financing:

Over-reliance on domestic treasury resources historically limited implementation scope (IMF, 2021). NDS2 should prioritize blended finance models, including PPPs (World Bank, 2022) and green bonds.

02

Inclusive Development:

Underutilization of women's economic participation and rural potential has hindered growth resilience (SADC Gender Monitor, 2022). Targeted inclusion mechanisms are recommended.

Accountability Systems

Constitutional provisions for transparent reporting (Section 315) require operationalization (Zimbabwe Constitution). Independent monitoring frameworks (AFROSAI-E, 2021) would strengthen implementation.

Feasibility-Based Planning

Implementation sequencing should align with resource capacity studies (OECD, 2019).

Climate Integration

Mainstreaming adaptation measures remains essential per national climate commitments (Zimbabwe NDC, 2021).

4.3 Overall Reflection of Previous Development Plans

Over 40 percent of the survey respondents either selected 'None' or 'Not sure', reflecting significant doubt or dissatisfaction with all the previous development frameworks. Below are views shared by respondents.

Poor implementation despite good intentions

'Whereas the policies were good, the implementation has been grossly poor'

Resource constraints at local levels

'Not effective as there were no resources at district to do the work. Hence quality service provision was compromised'

Lack of participation

'No citizen input'. Not surprisingly 93 percent of the respondents indicated that they are aware of their constitutional right (Section 13) to participate in development planning but over 53 percent have never been consulted in national development planning, while 40 percent have been consulted with 7 percent not sure. Consequently, 67 percent indicated that voices of CSOs and communities are not currently influencing national policies, while 20 percent believed that CSO and community voice is strong in policy spaces.

Lack of visible long-term results

'Cannot say which one was effective as I cannot see the sustained results up to today'

General disengagement:

'Misdirected priorities

Given the general challenges highlighted by communities across the previous development plans (ZIMASSET, TSP, NDS1), NDS2 must focus more on effective implementation at grassroots level, effective resource allocation across all levels of development implementation, citizen involvement, and transparent evaluation of results.

5.0 Review of the Global Partnership for Effective Development 4th Round Monitoring Result for Zimbabwe

Insights from the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) 2026-2035 Monitoring Round provides performance data on how well Zimbabwe is aligning development cooperation with national priorities. GPEDC's focus on country ownership, transparency, inclusiveness, results-focus, and accountability in development cooperation demonstrates Zimbabwe's progress in aligning external cooperation with national priorities.

5.1 Whole-of-Society Engagement

The results of the GPEDC 4th Round Monitoring Round established that stakeholder engagement of diverse stakeholders such as Civil Society Organisations in development planning and accountability mechanisms was medium, with some actors such as philanthropic organisations, sub-national governments excluded. The results on stakeholder engagement highlight that dialogues on priorities occur with select groups which limits inclusion.

The results present an opportunity for NDS2 to institutionalize inclusive and participatory governance across planning, implementation, and monitoring. As part of the coordination framework, the NDS2 must establish a platform for structured engagement with all sectors, including parliament, civil society, private sector, and local governments.

Realization of the NDS2 priority goals requires deeper and wider stakeholder engagement to be prioritized, especially fostering meaningful dialogue with underrepresented groups such as philanthropic organizations and marginalized social groups such as youths, women, persons with disabilities and the elderly. Strengthening parliamentary oversight and accountability could enhance legitimacy and transparency in implementing the 10 priority areas.

5.2 State and Use of Country Systems

The results of the 4th Round Monitoring established that while national development planning is strong, development partners only partially align with Zimbabwe's systems. PFM usage is low, and aid predictability and budget integration are weak. Only 20 percent of development cooperation is recorded in the national budget. Development partners use country-owned results frameworks for 70 percent of interventions, but indicator alignment is lower (58%), and only 56 percent of indicators rely on government statistics. Predictability and alignment of donor funding are weak with only 37 percent of scheduled public sector funding disbursed within the same fiscal year, and just 36 percent of partners provide forward spending plans.

There is an opportunity for NDS2 to be forward looking and integrate more development cooperation flows into the national budget and improving medium-term predictability for NDS2 planning and resource allocation. The NDS2 strategy should focus on strengthening country systems and harmonizing partner programs with national priorities across all 10 priority areas and ensure monitoring frameworks receive requisite data and funding schedules are adhered to for timely implementation.

5.3 Transparency and Accountability

The current results indicate that Zimbabwe has robust information systems but lacks comprehensive accountability mechanisms and publicly available progress reports. Zimbabwe has a comprehensive information management system for tracking development cooperation. Development partners comply with reporting requirements at very high rates. However, only one, which is a comprehensive policy framework for development co-operation, out of five accountability mechanism elements is in place. Under NDS2, efforts should be garnered toward establishing other accountability mechanisms such as country-level targets for government and development partners; regular joint assessments of progress; inclusive assessments; and timely and public availability of assessment results.

The NSD2 should further strengthen transparency frameworks and accountability mechanisms by notably developing regular joint progress assessments, publishing results, and setting explicit country-level targets. Enhancing transparency would promote donor and community confidence in NDS2 programs.

5.4 Leaving No One Behind

The current national strategy (NDS1) highlights the prioritization of vulnerable and marginalized groups with high specificity, setting disaggregated targets and results indicators by sex, age, health status, and geography. Data-driven assessments under NDS1 have been undertaken to identify the most vulnerable and the 2022 National Population and Housing Census collected disaggregated data. Consultation with CSOs representing marginalized groups (such as the poorest, elderly, disabled) reached a medium score.

It is important for NDS2 to ensure equity and inclusivity in development through continuing to advance the 'leave no one behind' agenda by strengthening data collection and analysis for disaggregated groups, expanding consultations, and building robust monitoring and evaluation systems that track progress in each of the priority areas for marginalized populations. NDS2 planning must include efforts to fill data gaps in priority sectors such as health, education, and social protection.

5.5 Civil Society Engagement

The GPEDC 4th Monitoring Round results on CSO enabling environment revealed that the environment for civil society is perceived as moderate by government but only basic by CSOs. There are improvements since the 2018 monitoring round, particularly in CSO effectiveness and legal frameworks, but CSO registration remains burdensome and funding for CSOs is limited. The periodic registration and prohibitive registration requirements divert scarce CSO capacity to compliance and disincentivize smaller community groups from formalizing and foster self-censorship in advocacy.

The result indicated that the space for CSO dialogue has increased yet it remains narrow. The implications have been exclusive development processes as CSOs are often excluded from implementation and monitoring of development programmes and policies. Resultantly, tokenistic participation has been entrenched as a culture where CSOs are 'consulted' but not co-deciding or co-assessing. Without joint assessments, grassroot evidence generated by rarely influence mid-course corrections which often leans to Government programs drifting from community needs.

NDS2 should creating a more enabling environment for CSOs by streamlining registration processes and enhancing access to funding. These reforms would leverage CSO effectiveness in policy advocacy, service delivery, and monitoring. Specific NDS2 priority areas that require community-level interventions, such as health, education, and poverty reduction, would benefit from stronger CSO involvement in both planning and accountability.

6 Citizen-Informed NDS2 Strategic Framework

Consultations with Citizens, CSOs, and Private sector solicited reflections on the 10 Government Priorities that will guide and underpin the formulation and implementation of the NDS 2 blueprint. The perspectives on non-state actors and communities were synthesized and presented in the table below.

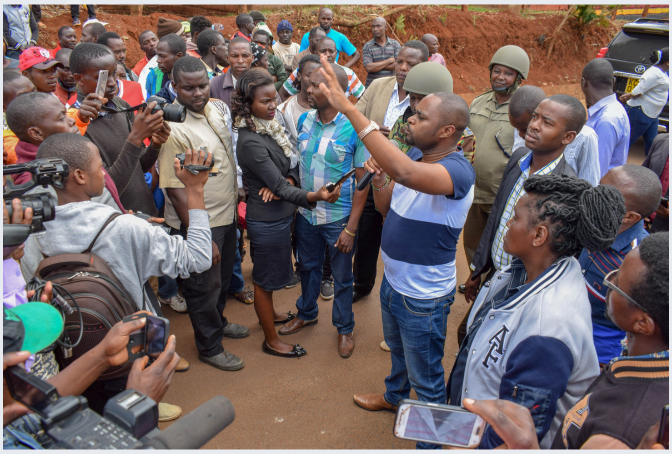


Table 3: Citizen-Input into NDS2 Strategic Framework

NDS2 Cluster	Citizen Demands and Aspirations	Vision	Core Objectives	Key Indicators to Track
1. Macro-Economic Stability and Financial Sector Deepening	Citizens demand a stable currency, affordable credit for SMEs and households, and protection of savings through predictable monetary policy. Aspiration for a diversified economy with inflation under control and reduced public debt.	Stable, diversified economy	• Single-digit inflation by 2028 • Debt/GDP less than 60%	• Inflation rate (YoY) • Fiscal deficit/GDP
2. Inclusive Economic Growth and Structural Transformation	Citizens expect equitable growth that reduces poverty and inequality, promotes local production, and guarantees equal economic participation for women, rural populations, and marginalized groups.	Gender-just economy	• 50% women's land tenure by 2030 • Universal care economy	• % gender-responsive budgets • Women's labor force participation
3. Infrastructure Development and Housing	Citizens want reliable electricity, clean water, functional roads, affordable housing, and efficient public transport. Aspirations include modern rail, broadband access, and renewable energy expansion.	World-class connectivity	• Rail freight: 4.5m tons/year • 600MW new renewable energy	• Logistics Performance Index • Road network condition
4. Food Security, Climate Resilience and Environmental Protection	Citizens demand sustainable farming systems, climate adaptation measures, protection of forests and water bodies, and food self-sufficiency. Aspiration for green value chains that create rural jobs.	Green industrializati on	• Lithium battery output: 5GWh by 2030 • 30% renewable energy	• Value-added exports • Carbon emission reduction
5. Science, Technology, Innovation and Human Capital Development	Citizens want a knowledge-driven economy where education, R&D, and ICT are accessible, affordable, and job-relevant. Aspirations include nationwide digital literacy and innovation hubs.	Tech-enabled governance	• 80% digital ID coverage • E-govt. services index: 0.75	• ICT contribution to GDP • Broadband penetration
6. Job Creation, Youth Development, Creative Industry and Culture	Citizens expect decent jobs, youth entrepreneurship funding, creative industry support, and vocational training. Aspirations include positioning youth as innovation leaders in the economy.	Youth as growth drivers	• 500 youth innovation hubs • 60% youth in formal work	• Youth entrepreneurshi p rate • Vocational training completion

Source: Primary Data Compiled by the Author

7. Social Development and Social Protection	Citizens demand universal healthcare, responsive social safety nets, and inclusive public services that protect the vulnerable from shocks like droughts or economic crises.	Shock-responsive safety nets	• 100% drought-affected households covered • UHC index: 65	• Social assistance coverage • Health access index
8. Regional Development and Inclusivity through Devolution and Decentralisation	Citizens want equitable resource allocation, locally-led infrastructure projects, and stronger local governance structures. Aspirations include retaining a share of provincial revenue.	Locally-led development	• 30% provincial revenue retention • 10+ services decentralized	• Local development projects funded • DDC/PDC capacity index
9. Image Building, International Relations and Trade	Citizens demand proactive global engagement, trade expansion under AfCFTA, and removal of barriers like sanctions to attract FDI and improve Zimbabwe's global reputation.	Global partnerships	• Sanctions removal roadmap • AfCFTA utilization rate: 40%	• Foreign direct investment • Country risk index
10. Good Governance, Institution Building, Peace and Security	Citizens expect transparent, corruption-free institutions, accessible justice, and inclusive policymaking. Aspirations include strong oversight, civic participation, and public trust in governance.	People-centered institutions	• 80% audit recommendations implemented • CSO monitoring platform	• Open Budget Index • Public trust in institutions

Source: Primary Data Compiled by the Author

Citizens' key areas of concern within the framework of Zimbabwe's NDS2 10 priority pillars revolve around a few non negotiables which include the urgent need to prioritize economic stability, social protection, productive transformation, human capital development, governance, and youth empowerment. Aligning these concerns with the NDS2 pillars, the section demonstrates how citizen-driven priorities can guide effective, inclusive, and sustainable national development.

6.1 Economic Stabilization Imperatives

The Macroeconomic Resilience pillar (NDS2 Priority 1) addresses citizens' urgent call for foundational stability. Communities highlighted the destructive impact of currency volatility on livelihoods: "Why save ZWL when it melts like ice? We price goods in USD by sunrise" (Harare vendor). Ministries acknowledged structural constraints: "Servicing $120M monthly interest leaves nothing for textbooks or transformers" (Finance Official).

The debt-to-GDP target of 60% directly responds to Provincial Development Committee warnings: "Debt is a noose choking districts – we need oxygen for clinics, not creditors" (CSO official).

These objectives demonstrate a broad national consensus that economic security is a prerequisite for sustainable transformation.

6.2 Equity-Centered Restructuring

The Social Development and Social Protection pillar (NDS2 Priority 7) embodies the voices of marginalized groups. Women smallholders emphasized asset exclusion: "We till the soil but titles live in men's pockets" (Mutoko farmer), validating the target of 50% women's land tenure. Care economy gaps were highlighted by CSOs: "Mothers skip meals to pay PWDs children's fees – where is our safety net?" (Bulawayo caregiver), supporting Universal Health Coverage (UHC) commitments. Communities exposed climate vulnerability: "Droughts now come like clockwork. We buried cattle bones, not grain" (Mwenezi Elder), underscoring the importance of the 100% drought coverage pledge under Pillar 7.

6.3 Productive Transformation Levers

Pillars 3, 4, and 8 on Infrastructure Development and Housing; Food Security, Climate Resilience and Environmental Protection; and Regional Development and Inclusivity through Devolution and Decentralization respond to barriers to productivity. Miners connected raw exports to persistent poverty: "The gold leaks away while we breathe mercury" (Shamva Artisanal Miner), supporting local beneficiation initiatives. Youth emphasized digital exclusion: "Without broadband, my coding certificates are toilet paper" (Epworth Graduate), making 80% digital ID coverage a priority. Private sector stakeholders noted infrastructure decay: "Moving tomatoes to Harare takes 12 hours – half rot in trucks" (Marondera farmer), highlighting the urgent need for rail and road modernization.

6.4. Human Capital and Institutional Enablers

Pillars 6 and 8 on Job Creation, Youth Development, Creative Industry and Culture; and Regional Development and Inclusivity through Devolution and Decentralization reflect generational demands. Unemployed graduates rejected tokenistic engagement: "We are tired of being 'leaders of tomorrow' in queues for NGO handouts" (Gweru Youth), justifying the creation of 500 innovation hubs. Rural councils flagged fiscal centralization: "Harare allocates 3% but demands 100% accountability" (RDC CEO), reinforcing the need for the 30% provincial revenue retention target. As one traditional leader noted: "Devolution without money is like a bicycle without pedals" (Matabeleland South Chief).

6.5 Governance and Partnership Foundations

Pillars 9 and 10 on Image Building, International Relations and Trade; and Good Governance, Institution Building, Peace & Security highlight citizens' demand for systemic trust and accountability. Cross-border traders reported sanctions-related delays: "My truck rots at Beitbridge for weeks while tomatoes spoil" (Mutare Trader), supporting the strategic utilization of AfCFTA. Provincial auditors identified governance gaps: "Last year's audit showed $2M diverted – still no prosecutions" (Midlands Province Key Informant), reinforcing the need for achieving the 80% implementation benchmark. CSOs emphasized governance as existential: "When tenders replace transparency, development becomes daylight robbery."

6.6. Investing in Young People and Harnessing the Demographic Dividend

Pillar 6 which focus on Job Creation, Youth Development, Creative Industry and Culture should fully harness Zimbabwe's demographic dividend. Youth organizations emphasized that empowerment, education, employment, and health, together with higher saving and investment, are essential: "Creating and realizing the dividend depends on the empowerment, education, employment and health of young people" (Youth Organisation Key Informant). Citizens noted the under-prioritization of youth: "Youths constitute over half of the population but receive the least budget allocation year in, year out," highlighting the urgency of increasing youth-targeted resources to reduce inequality and improve productive engagement.

6.7 Verbatim Evidence Matrix

Table 4: Verbatim Evidence matrix

Pillar	Citizen Voice	Institutional Voice
Macro Resilience	"My pension buys 3 cabbages today, 2 tomorrow" (Kwekwe Pensioner)	"Currency volatility deters every serious investor" (Government official)
Feminist Recovery	"Women feed nations but starve in boardrooms" (Gokwe Resident)	"GDP grows 23% faster when women hold assets" (Ministry of Women)
Devolution	"Centralized budgets built us a clinic without roof or drugs" (Chiredzi Resident)	"Local problems need local budgets, not Harare decrees" (Ministry of Local Government Official)

Source: Primary Data Compiled by the Authors

6.8 Emerging or Under-addressed Issues

While recognizing the 10 priority areas highlighted by the Government of Zimbabwe as the basis or framework for NDS2 development, consultations with CSOs, Community Leaders, and residents proffered emerging issues that NDS2 should prioritize. The consulted Stakeholders expect NDS2 to.

- Elevate Health and Education as core pillars with actionable targets and provincial equity.
- Establish Disability Inclusion as a standalone thematic area, not just a cross-cutting theme.
- Broaden Inclusion Policy to explicitly cover gender, minority rights, and PWDs.
- Create a Governance and Civic Engagement Framework with youth and citizen participation indicators.
- Clarify Food Security Strategy within agriculture, focusing on access, nutrition, and local production.
- Strengthen Oversight of the Insurance Sector to ensure affordable and inclusive coverage.
- Integrate Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Planning across sectors.

7.0 Analysis: Citizen-Aligned NDS2 Pillars within Continental Frameworks

Zimbabwe's proposed NDS2 pillars demonstrate a deliberate alignment with continental and global development blueprints, reflecting citizen aspirations while operationalizing regional commitments. The Macroeconomic Resilience pillar (Pillar 1) directly supports the African Union's Agenda 2063 (Aspiration 1: Inclusive growth) and RISDP 2020-2030 (Priority **Area 1:** Industrialization) by targeting debt sustainability and inflation control—preconditions for intra-African trade under the AfCFTA. Citizen testimonies on currency volatility ("Why save ZWL when it melts like ice?") underscore the urgency of this stability, which is foundational to SDG 8 (Decent Work) and SDG 17 (Partnerships). Similarly, Re-engagement & Diplomacy (Pillar 9) explicitly addresses AfCFTA utilization (40% target), resonating with Agenda 2063's call for 'an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa' and RISDP's trade facilitation goals.

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7.0 Analysis: Citizen-Aligned NDS2 Pillars within Continental Frameworks

The equity-focused pillars (Feminist Economic Recovery and Adaptive Social Protection) embed SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and Agenda 2063's Commitment to Women's Empowerment. The 50% women's land tenure target responds to grassroots demands ("We till the soil but titles live in men's pockets") while advancing AU's Land Policy Initiative. Universal care economy objectives and 100% drought coverage (Pillar 7) mirror SDG 1 (No Poverty) and Agenda 2063's Social Protection Framework, addressing citizen vulnerabilities exposed by climate shocks ("Droughts now come like clockwork").

These pillars operationalize RISDP's social inclusivity priorities, transforming marginalized voices into policy anchors.

Productivity enablers (Climate-Smart Value Chains, Digital Transformation, Infrastructure Modernization) align with Agenda 2063's Sustainable Development Goals (Aspiration 7: Environmentally sustainable economies) and RISDP's Industrialization Agenda. Lithium battery targets (5GWh) and renewable energy goals (30%) support green industrialization—a key AfCFTA value-addition imperative. Digital ID coverage (80%) and rail modernization respond to citizen frustrations ("Without broadband, my coding certificates are toilet paper") while advancing SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, Infrastructure). These pillars directly enhance AfCFTA participation by upgrading logistics (Logistics Performance Index) and value chains, as RISDP prioritizes.

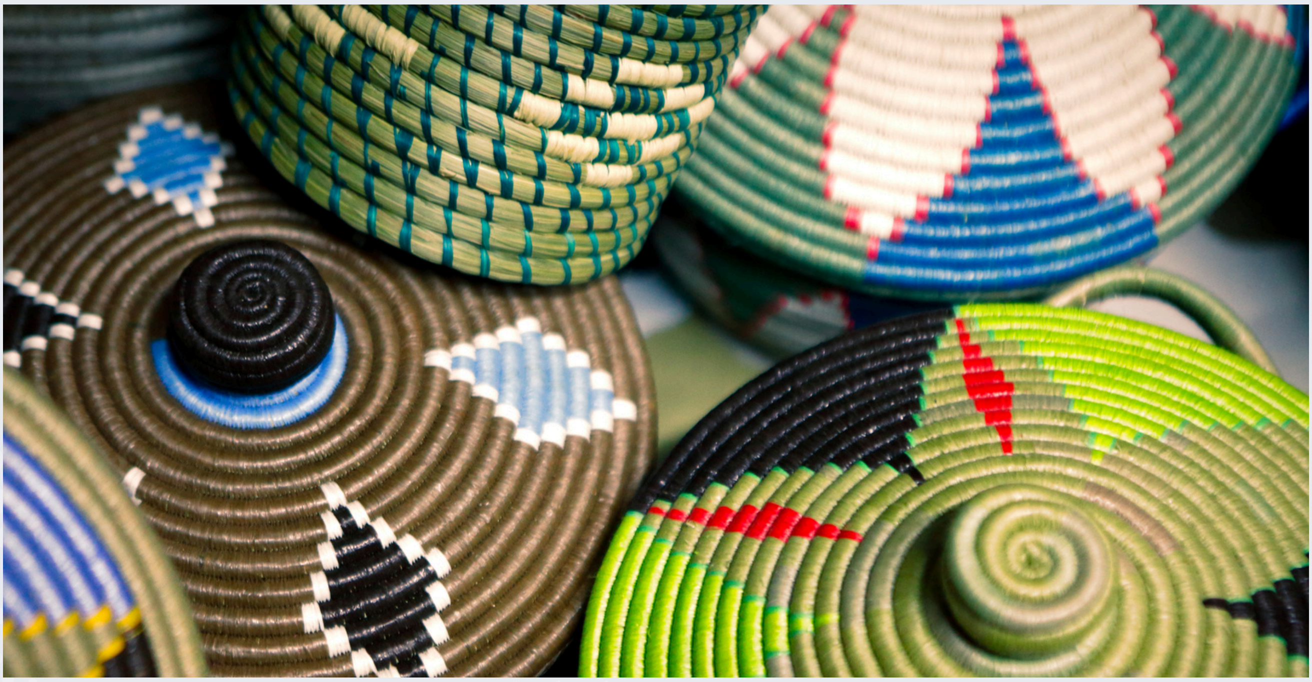
Zimbabwe's Debt and Arrears Clearance Framework (DACF) complements NDS2's Macroeconomic Resilience (Pillar 1) by explicitly targeting debt sustainability as a prerequisite for development financing, investment confidence, and AfCFTA participation. The DACF functions as both a macroeconomic stabilizer and a diplomatic instrument considering external arrears are constraining concessional borrowing and multilateral re-engagement. The AU's Agenda 2063 Financing Strategy underscores domestic resource mobilization and prudent debt management which aligns with Zimbabwe's objective to clear arrears and access development finance. Citizen testimonies underscore the lived impact of debt distress: 'Loans are for the powerful and for us, debt only means higher taxes' – Harare Resident.

The DACF is both a domestic consolidation tool and a continental integration enabler which bridges citizen demands for macroeconomic justice with regional imperatives for stability, trade, and industrialization.

Finally, institutional pillars on Regional Development and Inclusivity through Devolution and Decentralization; and Good Governance, Institution Building, Peace and Security embody Agenda 2063's Participatory Governance Principle (Aspiration 3) and SDG 16 (Peaceful Societies). The 30% provincial revenue retention target answers local demands ("Devolution without money is like a bicycle without pedals"), aligning with RISDP's decentralization focus. Youth innovation hubs (500) and audit implementation (80%) targets operationalize AU's Youth Charter and SDG 16.6 (Effective Institutions), countering citizen disillusionment ('We are tired of being 'leaders of tomorrow' in queues'). This institutional scaffolding ensures NDS2's citizen-centricity mirrors continental blueprints' emphasis on inclusive, transparent governance as the engine of sustainable development.

7.1 Country Experience

7.1.1 Lessons from Rwanda: Vision 2020 and National Strategy for Transformation 1 (NST1)



Rwanda provides a powerful African example of how disciplined planning and delivery can drive national transformation. The country launched Vision 2020 shortly after the 1994 genocide, with the goal of becoming a middle-income country by focusing on good governance, private-sector–led growth, infrastructure, human capital, and Information Communication Technology (ICT).

All strategies were designed with a strong focus on service delivery to ensure that investments in health, education, ICT, and poverty reduction reach ordinary citizens.

This long-term vision was operationalized through successive strategies, most notably the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1, 2017-2024), which aligned with the SDGs and the African Union's Agenda 2063. To ensure accountability, Rwanda institutionalized Imihigo-annual performance contracts signed by ministers, mayors, and local government leaders with clear, measurable targets. Progress was publicly monitored, and results determined both reputations and leadership continuity.

Central to Rwanda's success were several non-negotiables. First, political will at the highest level ensured consistent ownership of the national vision, with the President and Cabinet directly overseeing delivery. Second, accountability was strictly enforced through Imihigo, where underperformance carried real consequences. Third, all strategies were designed with a strong focus on service delivery to ensure that investments in health, education, ICT, and poverty reduction reach ordinary citizens. Finally, zero tolerance for corruption and wastage guaranteed that resources were channelled effectively to development priorities.

Civil society and citizens were not passive in this process. Rwanda institutionalized Umushyikirano (the National Dialogue Council) which is an annual forum chaired by the President, where citizens, CSOs, the private sector, and even the diaspora directly questioned ministers on progress. Planning was decentralized with each district creating its own development plans informed by community consultations. CSOs played a watchdog role, participating in joint sector reviews and using community scorecards to assess service delivery. This fostered a strong sense of partnership between the state and its citizens.

Ownership of the transformation agenda was further strengthened through both vertical and horizontal integration. National goals cascaded into district and sectoral plans which made it clear to citizens how local initiatives contributed to national transformation. Transparency was key: annual evaluations of Imihigo were televised and widely reported which created public trust and accountability. The Rwandan diaspora was mobilized as an active contributor, investing in projects and transferring knowledge. Over time, a culture of performance and results became embedded across government and society, supported by regular reporting and data-driven management.

Rwanda's experience offers several lessons for Zimbabwe's NDS2 (2026–2030). Zimbabwe can adopt Imihigo-style performance contracts between central government, provinces, and districts to ensure NDS2 targets translate into local action. A National Dialogue Platform could be institutionalized to allow citizens and CSOs to interrogate progress annually. Public scorecards and district or provincial rankings could drive competition and accountability in service delivery. Embedding strict anti-corruption safeguards would protect development resources, while mobilizing the diaspora and private sector would unlock investment and innovation.

Rwanda's case demonstrates that the key to achieving upper-middle-income status lies not only in drafting visionary strategies but in building a culture of delivery, citizen accountability, and performance discipline. If Zimbabwe adapted these principles to its context, NDS2 can become true engine for national transformation by 2030.

9.2 Analysis of Ethiopia's Development Strategy and Applicable Lessons for Zimbabwe's 2030 Ambition

Ethiopia's current development approach, crystallized in the post-2018 Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda (HERA), represents a significant strategic pivot prioritizing macroeconomic stabilization, private sector liberalization, and export-oriented industrialization as pathways to structural transformation.

This strategy builds upon earlier heavy infrastructure investments while consciously shifting towards market-opening measures. Key pillars include tackling chronic inflation and foreign exchange shortages through fiscal discipline and monetary reform, partially privatizing major state-owned enterprises like Ethio Telecom to attract foreign capital and expertise, and opening previously restricted sectors (logistics, energy, telecoms) to private investment. Concurrently, Ethiopia continues its legacy of large-scale, strategic infrastructure development – most notably the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam for energy security and critical transport corridors like the Addis-Djibouti railway – aimed squarely at reducing logistics costs and enhancing export competitiveness.

This infrastructure underpins a focused industrialization drive centered on establishing specialized industrial parks (e.g., Hawassa, Bole Lemi) designed to attract foreign direct investment, particularly in labor-intensive, export-oriented manufacturing like textiles and apparel. Complementing this is an effort to modernize agriculture beyond subsistence towards commercialization, value addition, and export diversification, alongside substantial investments in human capital through university and technical school expansion.

For Zimbabwe, aiming to achieve upper-middle-income status by the highly ambitious 2030 target, Ethiopia's experience offers valuable, albeit context-specific, lessons.

The foremost and non-negotiable imperative for Zimbabwe is achieving and sustaining macroeconomic stability. Ethiopia's HERA explicitly prioritized this foundation; Zimbabwe's path is fundamentally blocked without conquering hyperinflation, establishing lasting confidence in its currency, managing unsustainable debt, and resolving chronic foreign exchange shortages. This demands unwavering commitment to credible, consistent, and coordinated fiscal and monetary policies, potentially requiring a structured, homegrown reform program similar in focus to HERA but tailored to Zimbabwe's unique challenges, including its legacy debt and currency crisis. Without this bedrock, other strategies will flounder.

Secondly, Zimbabwe must embrace bold private sector liberalization and empowerment as the engine of growth. Ethiopia's decisive moves to open monopolized sectors signal a commitment to attracting private capital that Zimbabwe must emulate. This necessitates going beyond rhetoric to concrete actions: clarifying and depoliticizing indigenization policies, providing ironclad property rights (particularly concerning land tenure to unlock agricultural investment), simplifying burdensome regulations, and actively courting foreign direct investment (FDI) in strategic sectors like mining, energy, and infrastructure. Efficient privatization or partial privatization of inefficient state-owned enterprises, managed transparently, could free up capital and improve service delivery, mirroring Ethiopia's approach with Ethio Telecom.

Thirdly, strategic, export-oriented industrialization leveraging comparative advantages is crucial. While Ethiopia focused on light manufacturing in industrial parks, Zimbabwe possesses significant potential in mineral beneficiation (lithium, platinum, chrome) and high-value agro-processing (tobacco, horticulture, beef). The lesson is not to copy Ethiopia's sectoral focus, but its strategy: developing specialized economic zones or industrial clusters with reliable, world-class infrastructure (power, water, transport), streamlined bureaucracy, and incentives aligned with generating exports and formal employment. Infrastructure investment itself must be ruthlessly prioritized for projects with clear economic returns, particularly reliable power generation (embracing renewables) and efficient transport corridors linking to regional ports (Beira, Maputo, Durban), utilizing Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to overcome fiscal constraints.

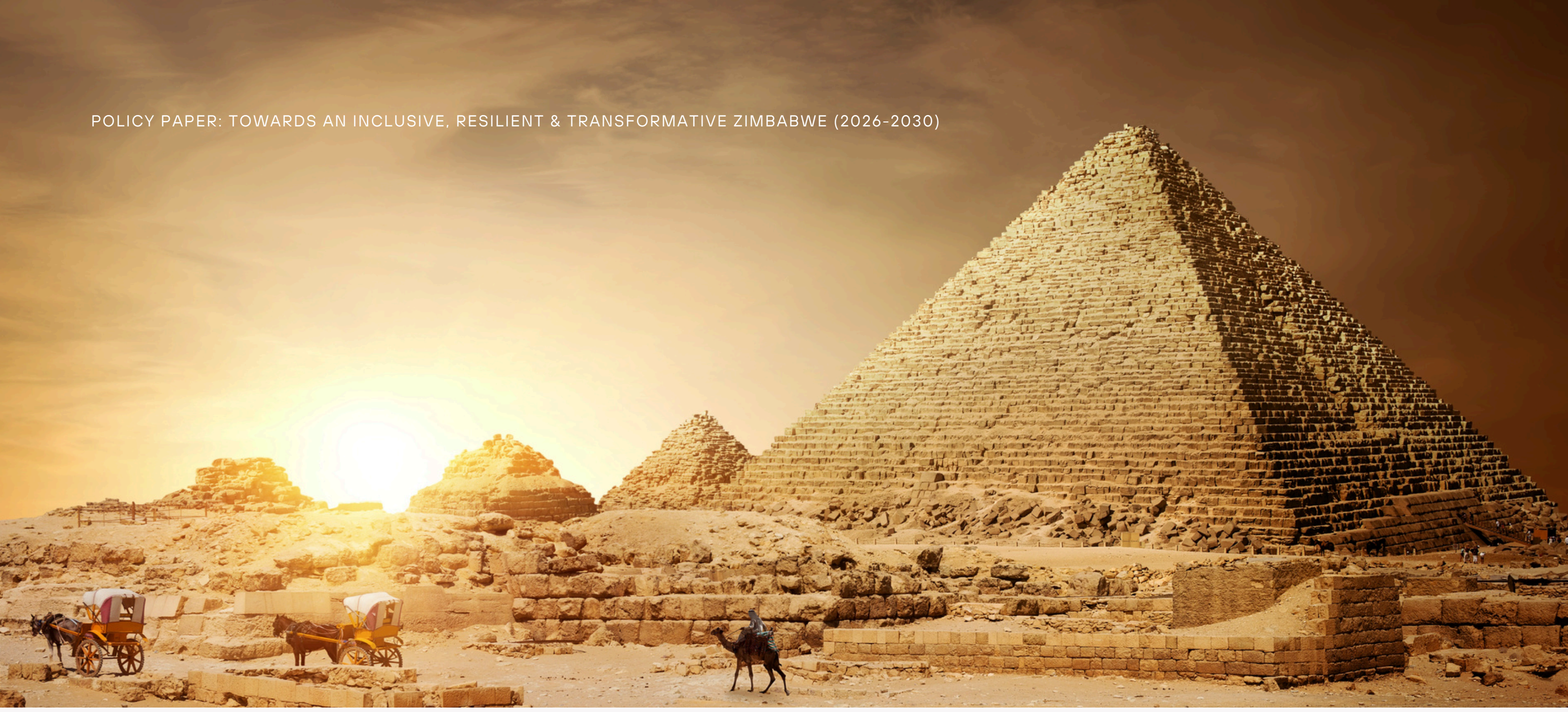
Fourth, agricultural transformation is vital for both growth and inclusion. Ethiopia's push towards commercialization and value chains offers a model. Zimbabwe must address the fundamental constraint of land tenure security to incentivize investment in irrigation, technology, and inputs for both large-scale commercial and smallholder farmers. Strengthening market linkages, promoting contract farming, and supporting agro-processors to add value domestically before export are essential steps to move beyond commodity dependence.

Finally, effective governance and implementation capacity emerge as the critical differentiator from Ethiopia's own mixed results. Ambitious plans falter without execution. Zimbabwe's success hinges on demonstrable progress in combating corruption, strengthening key institutions (judiciary, revenue authority), ensuring policy consistency beyond political cycles, and building a competent, meritocratic bureaucracy capable of managing complex reforms. Furthermore, investing in human capital through education aligned with future economic needs (STEM, technical skills for mining tech, agro-processing, renewables) and improved healthcare is fundamental for sustainable growth and productivity.

Ethiopia's strategy underscores the necessity of foundational stability, private sector dynamism, strategic infrastructure, and export-focused value addition. Zimbabwe can adapt these principles but must prioritize its unique context: immediate macroeconomic stabilization is paramount, resolving land tenure is critical for agriculture, and leveraging mineral wealth through beneficiation offers a distinct opportunity. Achieving upper-middle-income status by 2030 requires not just adopting sound strategies, but an unprecedented level of political will, policy consistency, effective governance, and efficient implementation that addresses Zimbabwe's specific historical and institutional challenges. The lessons from Ethiopia are clear, but the path for Zimbabwe demands exceptional focus, unwavering commitment, and a relentless pursuit of stability and openness to unlock its inherent potential.

9.3. Strategic Analysis: Egypt, Tunisia, and Zimbabwe's Development Pathways in a Global Context

Egypt and Tunisia present contrasting yet instructive development models within Africa's complex economic landscape, offering critical lessons for Zimbabwe's ambitious 2030 upper-middle-income goal. Their strategies unfold against a backdrop of global financial pressures, continental free trade ambitions (AfCFTA), and regional instability, demanding a nuanced analysis for Zimbabwe's adaptation.



Egypt: Stabilization, Mega-Projects, and Geostrategic Positioning

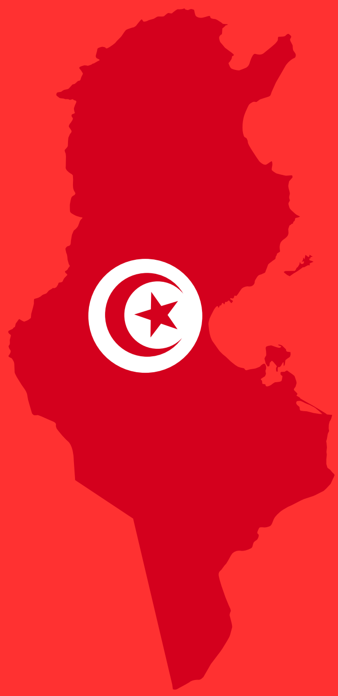
Egypt's strategy, heavily influenced by successive IMF programs since 2016, prioritizes immediate macroeconomic stabilization through harsh measures: a floated currency inducing significant devaluation, drastic cuts to energy subsidies, and fiscal consolidation. This painful adjustment aims to resolve chronic foreign exchange shortages and attract capital. Concurrently, the state is driving massive infrastructure investment (New Administrative Capital, expanded Suez Canal corridor, renewable energy projects) financed largely by sovereign debt and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) capital. This state-centric model seeks rapid growth and job creation but risks crowding out the private sector, exacerbating public debt vulnerabilities, and fostering dependency on volatile external financing. While targeting foreign exchange through tourism, Suez Canal fees, remittances, and FDI in energy/real estate, deep structural reforms to enhance private sector competitiveness and governance remain limited.

Egypt's strategy leverages its geostrategic importance, securing substantial GCC and Western support, but faces persistent high inflation and social strain, highlighting the trade-offs between stabilization speed, debt sustainability, and inclusive growth within global financial architectures.

"Egypt's reforms demonstrate resolve but also reveal the social costs of rapid stabilization."

Tunisia: Reform Paralysis Amid Democratic Struggles

Tunisia's post-2011 trajectory demonstrates the devastating impact of political fragmentation on economic strategy. Despite possessing strong human capital foundations and a potentially diversified export base (manufacturing, services), chronic political instability, bureaucratic inertia, and powerful vested interests (notably unions opposing subsidy and SOE reforms) have crippled implementation of its IMF-mandated stabilization and reform program. While official policy emphasizes private sector-led growth, export diversification (leveraging EU proximity and AfCFTA potential), and human capital development, execution is consistently thwarted. The result is persistent high inflation, unsustainable debt, rampant unemployment (especially youth), and eroded purchasing power, fueling social unrest that further undermines reform efforts. Tunisia's experience starkly illustrates how weak governance and lack of social consensus can nullify sound economic plans, even within favourable regional trade frameworks, leaving the country trapped in a cycle of crisis and external dependency.



Global, Continental, and Regional Frameworks as Context

Both nations operate within stringent IMF conditionalities, reflecting global financial market pressures on indebted economies. Regionally, North Africa's proximity to Europe offers trade advantages but also exposes it to spillover effects from conflicts and migration pressures. Continentally, the AfCFTA presents a significant opportunity for export diversification and regional value chains, yet its benefits remain constrained by infrastructure gaps, non-tariff barriers, and implementation delays – challenges acutely relevant to landlocked Zimbabwe. Egypt actively positions itself within competing global infrastructure initiatives (e.g., BRI, Global Gateway), while Tunisia struggles to leverage its potential within the Euro-Mediterranean framework.

9.4 Synthesized Lessons for Zimbabwe's 2030 Quest

1. Macroeconomic Stability: The Unavoidable Foundation: Zimbabwe, like Egypt and Tunisia, must achieve durable stabilization – conquering hyperinflation, resolving forex shortages, and managing debt. However, Zimbabwe cannot ignore the social cost. Lessons demand a credible, sequenced stabilization plan integrated with robust, well-funded social protection from inception to mitigate hardship and maintain social cohesion, avoiding Tunisia's reform paralysis and Egypt's social strain. Engaging constructively with international financial institutions (IFIs) and creditors for debt resolution is non-negotiable.

2. Private Sector as the Core Engine of Sustainable Growth: Egypt's state-heavy model risks debt and inefficiency. Tunisia's intended private focus, though unrealized, points the way. Zimbabwe must place genuine private sector liberation and empowerment at the heart of its strategy. This requires concrete actions: depoliticizing the economy, guaranteeing property rights (especially land tenure), dismantling bureaucratic hurdles, ensuring fair competition (SOE reform/transparent privatization), and fostering a transparent, rules-based environment for both domestic and foreign investment. Attracting diversified FDI into value-added sectors (mineral beneficiation, high-value agro-processing, renewable energy, services) is crucial, moving beyond raw commodity dependence.

3. Strategic Infrastructure Investment within Fiscal Realities: Mega-projects carry Egypt's debt risks. Zimbabwe must prioritize economically viable, enabling infrastructure with demonstrable returns: reliable, affordable power (especially renewables), efficient regional transport corridors (leveraging SADC and access to ports like Beira/Maputo), and digital connectivity. Transparent Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) aligned with continental initiatives like PIDA (Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa) are essential given fiscal constraints, demanding rigorous project selection and governance to avoid white elephants.

4.Leveraging Human Capital and Regional Integration: Tunisia's skilled workforce, despite its struggles, remains a key asset. Zimbabwe must urgently reform and align education/training (STEM, TVET, digital skills) with future economic needs (mining tech, agro-processing, renewables, services) to build a competitive advantage. Crucially, Zimbabwe must proactively harness the AfCFTA. This means investing in trade facilitation (customs modernisation, standards compliance) and strategically positioning itself within regional value chains, particularly leveraging its mineral wealth for beneficiation and its agricultural potential for processed exports into the continental market.

5.Governance & Institutions: The Make-or-Break Factor: Tunisia's experience is the starkest warning: without effective governance, all else fails. Zimbabwe's 2030 ambition hinges entirely on:

- Demonstrable Anti-Corruption: High-level, visible action to restore credibility.
- Strong, Independent Institutions: A competent judiciary, efficient revenue authority, and depoliticized civil service.
- Policy Credibility and Consistency: Sustained commitment to reforms across political cycles, avoiding populist reversals.
- Implementation Capacity: Building state capability to execute complex programs efficiently and transparently.
- **Social Dialogue:** Fostering consensus on difficult reforms to avoid Tunisia's paralysis.

A Tailored Path Demanding Unprecedented Resolve

Egypt underscores the imperative of stabilization and the risks of state-led debt-fueled growth, while Tunisia highlights the existential threat posed by governance failures and political instability. For Zimbabwe, achieving upper-middle-income status by 2030 requires a uniquely tailored approach: immediate, socially conscious stabilization combined with deep, irreversible structural reforms that unleash the private sector. Success demands strategically investing in human capital and enabling infrastructure while aggressively leveraging the AfCFTA for diversified, value-added exports. Critically, this path is only viable with a fundamental transformation in governance – building strong institutions, ensuring policy consistency, and eradicating corruption. Zimbabwe must navigate global financial pressures and continental opportunities with agility, learning from both the ambitions and pitfalls of North Africa. The 2030 target is extraordinarily ambitious; meeting it requires not just sound economic strategy, but an unparalleled level of political will, institutional integrity, and societal commitment focused relentlessly on creating a stable, open, and competitive economic environment.

10.0 Implementation Architecture: From Policy to Impact

10.1 Integrated Implementation Matrix

Table 5: Integrated Implementation Matrix - Linking mechanisms to NDS2 pillars, continental frameworks, and citizen priorities

Component	Key Mechanism	Linked NDS2 Pillar(s)	Continental Alignment	Citizen Priority Addressed	Key Performance Indicators
Institutional Mechanisms	NDS2 Delivery Unit (OPC-CSO-Private Sector)	All pillars	AU Agenda 2063 (Asp. 6); RISDP Multi-Stakeholder Governance	"When tenders replace transparency..." (Accountability)	Quarterly cross-pillar progress reports; CSO satisfaction index
	Provincial Co-Creation Councils (40% quotas)	Pillar 5 (Devolution), Pillar 6 (Youth)	AU Gender Equality Strategy; AfCFTA Inclusivity Protocols	"Devolution without money is a bicycle without pedals" (Matabeleland Chief)	% women/youth-led projects funded; local budget autonomy index
	Debt-for-SDG Swaps	Pillar 3 (Climate Value Chains), Pillar 8 (Infrastructure)	AU Climate Finance Mechanism; SDG 13	"Droughts come like clockwork" (Mwenezi Elder)	MW renewable energy deployed; % drought-affected households covered
Financing Innovations	Zimbabwe SDG Bond ($500m)	Pillar 8, Pillar 3, Pillar 7	Agenda 2063 Infrastructure Revolution; AfCFTA Green Protocols	"Moving tomatoes takes 12 hours – half rot" (Marondera Farmer)	Renewable energy capacity added (MW); climate-resilient housing units built
	Gender Lens Procurement (30% women-led SMEs)	Pillar 2 (Feminist Recovery)	AU Women's Financial Inclusion Charter; SDG 5	"Women starve in boardrooms" (Gokwe Resident)	% women-owned SMEs winning contracts; growth in female formal employment
Monitoring & Accountability	Citizen-Led Scorecards (10 indicators)	Pillar 10 (Governance)	AU African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM); SDG 16.6	"My pension buys 3 cabbages today, 2 tomorrow" (Kwekwe Pensioner)	Community validation rate of data; scorecard update frequency (bi-annual)
	Independent NDS2 Audit Panel (Parliament)	Pillar 9-10	Agenda 2063 Governance Architecture; RISDP Accountability	"Last year's audit showed $2M diverted – no prosecutions" (Midlands Auditor)	% audit recommendations implemented; public hearing coverage (district-level)

Source: Primary Data Compiled by Authors

Monitoring and Evaluation Ecosystem
A dual-track system combining real-time data and institutional audits
Digital Impact Dashboard
Metrics Tracked:

- Macro Resilience: Inflation rate (YoY), Debt/GDP
- Gender Equity: Women's land tenure %, care economy coverage
- Climate/Infrastructure: Renewable energy output, Logistics Performance Index
- Accountability: Open Budget Index, audit implementation rate

Data Sources:

- Automated ministry reporting (monthly)
- Citizen scorecard submissions (via USSD/mobile app)
- AfCFTA utilization tracker (real-time trade data)

Evaluation Feedback Loops

Tool	Frequency	Stakeholders	Alignment Hook
Provincial Co-Creation Councils	Quarterly	Women farmers, youth entrepreneurs, PWDs	Localizes Agenda 2063's "People-Driven Development"
NDS2 Audit Public Hearings	Biannual	CSOs, traditional leaders, parliament	Enforces AU Convention on Preventing Corruption
SDG Bond Impact Reviews	Annual	Investors, climate vulnerable communities	Tracks RISDP green industrialization targets

Continental Integration Levers

- AfCFTA Synergy: Gender Lens Investing linked to AfCFTA Rules of Origin for women-led export SMEs
- Agenda 2063 Alignment: Debt-for-SDG Swaps reported to AU Climate Reporting Platform
- RISDP Convergence: Citizen Scorecards use SADC Results-Based Monitoring Framework

Key Design Principles

1. **Subsidiarity in Action:** Provincial Councils validate Pillar 5 (Devolution) targets using AU Subnational Governance Standards.
2. **Citizen-Data Fusion:** Scorecards cross-verify institutional data (e.g., "80% digital ID coverage" validated by Epworth youth).
3. **Liability-to-Opportunity Conversion:** Debt swaps transform Pillar 1's "debt/GDP <60%" target into Pillar 8's renewable infrastructure.
4. **Inter-Pillar Synergies:** Gender procurement (Pillar 2) funds women-led lithium processing (Pillar 3), advancing AfCFTA value-chain integration.

11.0 Strategies for Achieving NDS2

11.1 Financing Strategy

Civil society stresses that financing realism is essential to avoid repeating the pitfalls of ZIMASSET. NDS2 must adopt a blended finance model that mobilizes resources from diverse sources. Domestically, reforms must focus on strengthening tax collection, curbing leakages, and fighting corruption through the implementation of at least 80% of Auditor General's recommendations annually. Public-private partnerships should be scaled up, particularly for renewable energy expansion, rail rehabilitation, and housing development. Innovative financing instruments must also be introduced, including a $500 million SDG bond, debt-for-climate swaps, and gender-lens procurement policies requiring that 30% of contracts go to women-led enterprises. Additionally, Zimbabwe must align external development cooperation with national priorities by integrating at least 70% of donor funding into the national budget, compared to the current 20% alignment.

11.2 Stakeholder Engagement

One of the critical shortcomings of past development frameworks has been tokenistic consultations with civil society. To correct this, NDS2 must institutionalize whole-of-society engagement. This can be achieved by establishing Provincial Co-Creation Councils that guarantee representation for youth, women, and persons with disabilities. Civil society organizations should be formally represented within the NDS2 Delivery Unit to ensure their perspectives inform implementation and monitoring. Furthermore, an Annual National Dialogue Forum should be established, modelled on Rwanda's Umushyikirano, where citizens, civil society, private sector, and the diaspora are able to directly question government on NDS2 delivery. This will transform consultation into genuine co-decision-making, strengthening legitimacy and accountability.

11.3 Implementation and Monitoring Architecture

NDS2 must include a robust implementation and monitoring framework to ensure accountability and delivery. A dual monitoring system is proposed. The first component is a Digital Impact Dashboard that tracks macroeconomic indicators such as inflation, debt-to-GDP ratio, broadband penetration, women's land ownership, and youth employment in real time. The second component is community-led monitoring through Citizen Scorecards, which will review service delivery in sectors like health, education, and infrastructure every six months. To reinforce transparency, Independent Audit Panels should report directly to Parliament and civil society on resource use and misallocations. Finally, Annual Joint Progress Reports, co-authored with civil society, should be published and made publicly accessible. By 2030, specific targets include raising broadband penetration to 80% (from 52% in 2025), delivering 60,000 affordable housing units, expanding social protection coverage to 85% of vulnerable groups, and raising youth entrepreneurship rates from 15% in 2025 to 50%.

2.0 Recommendations and Policy Actions

Recommendations suggested to strengthen the NDS2 framework generated through the key informant interviews, focus group discussions and survey responses include.

1. Macro-Economic Stability and Financial Sector Deepening

- Implement credible debt restructuring and pursue arrears clearance strategies.
- Strengthen monetary policy through an inflation-targeting framework to stabilize currency.
- Broaden domestic revenue through improved tax collection, plugging leakages, and reducing illicit financial flows.
- Establish innovative financing instruments (SDG bonds, debt-for-climate swaps, PPPs).
- Increase fiscal discipline by curbing wasteful expenditure (e.g., excessive travel, oversized Parliament).

2. Inclusive Economic Growth and Structural Transformation

- Foster equitable access to productive assets by ensuring 50% women's land tenure by 2030.
- Enforce gender-responsive budgets across line ministries and agencies.
- Support women's cooperatives, SMEs, and access to credit, inputs, and markets.
- Promote inclusive agro-industrialization through contract farming, value chains, and beneficiation initiatives.

3. Infrastructure Development and Housing

- Modernize transport infrastructure: rehabilitate rail, trunk roads, and border posts for regional connectivity.
- Invest in affordable and climate-smart housing (60,000 units by 2030) using blended financing models.
- Strengthen energy mix with 600MW renewable energy expansion.
- Revamp water and sanitation infrastructure to reduce disease and enhance resilience.

4. Food Security, Climate Resilience and Environmental Protection

- Scale investments in irrigation, climate-smart agriculture, and agro-processing.
- Mandate local beneficiation of minerals and agro-products for export value addition.
- Mainstream climate resilience planning across all sectors with early warning systems and climate insurance.
- Promote environmental sustainability by regulating artisanal mining and scaling renewable energy adoption.

5. Science, Technology, Innovation and Human Capital Development

- Expand ICT infrastructure to achieve 80% digital coverage and broadband penetration by 2030.
- Develop innovation hubs and centers linked to industry priorities.
- Enhance vocational and technical education aligned to labor market needs (STEM, mining technology, agro-industry).
- Integrate all government e-services into a single citizen-friendly portal.

6. Job Creation, Youth Development, Creative Industries and Culture

- Create 500 youth innovation hubs and entrepreneurship funds for startups and SMEs.
- Align vocational training with industry needs to reduce skills mismatches.
- Champion creative industries and culture as economic growth drivers through investment and regulatory support.
- Mainstream youth in governance, leadership, and policy decision-making spaces.

7. Social Development and Social Protection

- Expand Universal Health Coverage, prioritizing rural access through mobile health units and new clinics.
- Increase social protection coverage to 85% of vulnerable populations through digital targeting systems.
- Introduce earmarked health taxes for sustainable sector financing.
- Strengthen safety nets to address shocks (droughts, economic volatility, pandemics)

8. Regional Development and Inclusivity through Devolution and Decentralisation

- Enforce fiscal devolution with a legally mandated 30% provincial revenue retention rate.
- Guarantee equitable service delivery by decentralizing key services (water, schools, health).
- Establish transparent frameworks to monitor local authority accountability.
- Direct climate financing and infrastructure resources to districts and provincial structures.

9. Image Building, International Relations and Trade

- Pursue structured re-engagement with IFIs and creditors to unlock concessional finance.
- Proactively position Zimbabwe in AfCFTA value chains, increasing utilization to 40%.
- Market Zimbabwe through regional trade fairs and diplomatic missions to attract FDI.
- Develop a sanctions removal roadmap that leverages strategic partnerships with AU, SADC, and bilateral actors.

10. Good Governance, Institution Building, Peace and Security

- Institutionalize anti-corruption enforcement by strengthening the Attorney General's prosecutorial authority and implementing 80% of Auditor General recommendations annually.
- Mainstream citizen accountability through digital scorecards, community audits, and annual public hearings.
- Reform public sector including reducing the size of Parliament, eliminate redundant ministries, and enforce asset disclosure for public officials.
- Strengthen independent institutions (judiciary, Parliament, oversight commissions) to ensure credible checks and balances.

3.0 Conclusion and next steps

The NDS2 must be judged by execution, not vision. Zimbabwe has a rare window to consolidate hard lessons from NDS1 and past frameworks to achieve a citizen-driven, climate-smart, and inclusive pathway to Vision 2030.
Actionable next steps include:

1. Establish an NDS2 Delivery Unit embedded in the Office of the President and Cabinet, with civil society and private sector representation.
2. Legislate financing and oversight mechanisms such as earmarked health taxes, mandatory gender budget audits, and transparent PPP frameworks.
3. Launch Provincial Co-Creation Councils and an Annual National Dialogue Forum to institutionalize participatory development.
4. Roll out a Digital Impact Dashboard and Citizen monitoring to track progress real-time and enforce accountability.
5. Reinforce international partnerships such as debt relief, AfCFTA implementation, and climate financing, for both fiscal stability and regional competitiveness.

Decisively confronting macroeconomic fragility, institutional weaknesses, and social inequities, NDS2 can transform Zimbabwe's demographic and resource advantages into sustainable, inclusive development. The litmus test will lie in converting strategies into lived improvements, clinics with medicine, jobs for youth, roofs over families, and genuine governance renewal.