

ZimRights Commentary on

The Zimbabwe National Development Strategy 1

[2021 - 2025] (NDS1)



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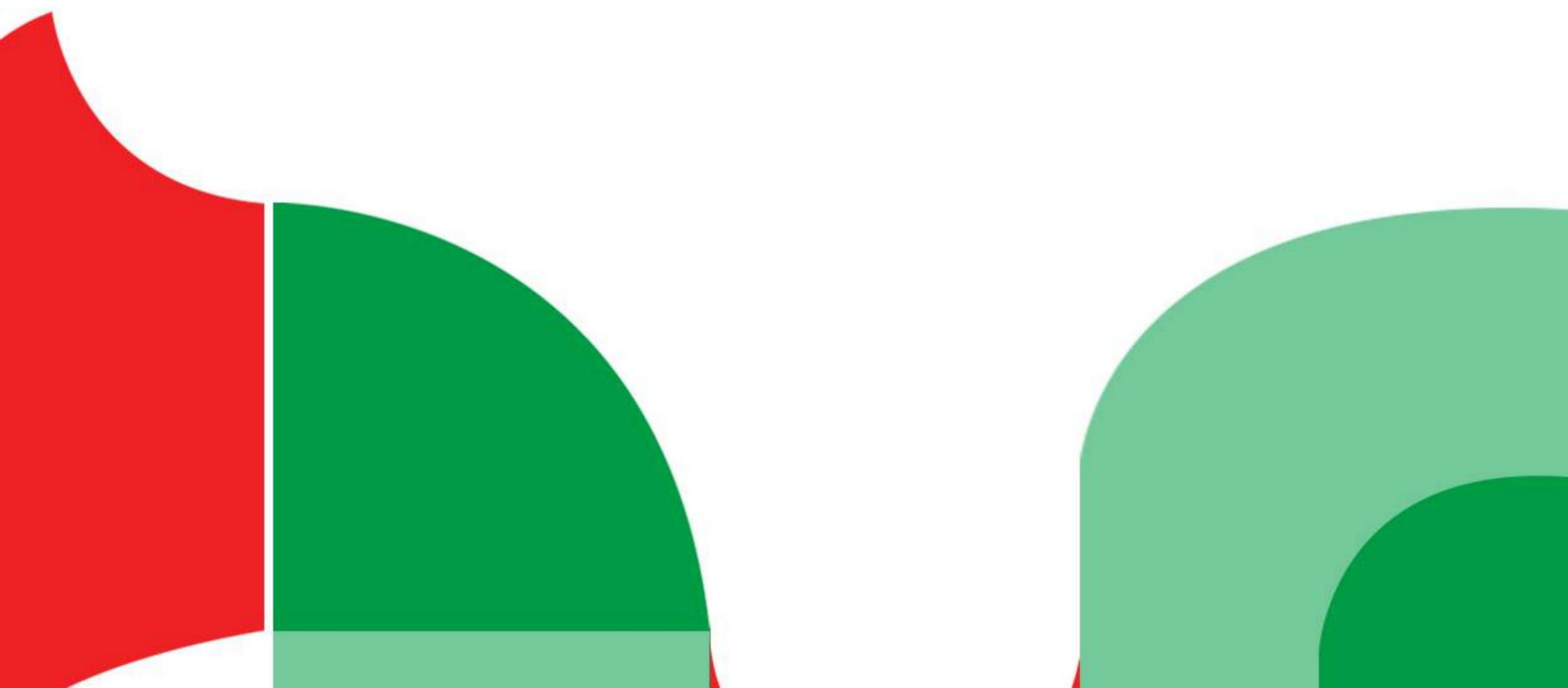
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Problems and weaknesses defining the development context in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is a country that has over the years suffered serious development challenges negatively affecting its people in nutrition, health, education, infrastructure, housing, and other key issues. On food security and nutrition, close to 8 million are believed to be food insecure in the country's urban and rural populations. With regards education, the Government notes that literacy and numeracy levels have declined all over the country . Moreover, with regards primary education it has been established that 17.8% of Grade 7 learners fail to proceed to Form 1 mainly due to inability to pay fees . On the environment front, observers have noted that Zimbabwe is experiencing land, water, and air pollution. Littering, mushrooming of illegal waste dumps, illegal mining, veld fires and deforestation have become rampant. ZimRights has traversed the country carrying out assessments and it has noted that in areas such as Penhalonga (Manicaland), Mazoe and Bindura Mashonaland East) and Kadoma and Gweru (Midlands) there is uncontrolled open pit mining for gold which has been a source of open and brutal violence through machete gangs. In other areas such as Chipinge and Chiredzi there have been serious displacements of communities who have lived in those areas for generations. For example, in Chipinge, hundreds of people have been displaced or are threatened with displacement because there are corporations reportedly seeking the land to practice horticulture and grow macadamia nuts and avocados for the export markets. In Matabeleland there are reports of wood logging that are being illegally done at night by suspected military people. In Chiredzi, there are reports that the Nyang'ambe community has been displaced and for almost 6 months have been living in the open because reportedly there are senior government officials who would like to take their land to grow the lucrative Lucerne grass . The land degradation due to the open pits left behind means that the land there has become unfit for agricultural purposes further contributing to the precariousness of the food security and livelihoods situation for the elderly and women who live in those areas and are dependent on agriculture. On governance, the Government notes that corruption is a stumbling block in the delivery of public services. On the human rights front, civil society groups continue to document serious human rights violations on the citizens emanating from police and military brutality. The August 2018 post-election killings, the quashing of the January 2019 fuel riots as well as several other egregious human rights violations of civil society activists and citizens in the country comes to the fore. On governance, rampant corruption, lack of rule of law, a failure to align Zimbabwe's legislation with the 2013 constitution are all issues that have been noted to be contributing severely to the stagnant growth of Zimbabwe's fortunes.

1 See statement by the IMF released on 22 February 2020 here <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2020/02/26/pr2072-zimbabwe-imf-executive-board-concludes-2020-article-iv-consultation> Retrieved on 30 November 2020

2 NDS1 para 622

3 NDS1 para 621

4 <http://kubatana.net/2020/09/14/gutsaruzhinji-villagers-in-chiredzi-north-are-more-vulnerable-to-losing-their-land-due-to-the-ongoing-land-conflict/>

5 <http://kubatana.net/2020/06/03/villagers-in-chilonga-chiredzi-protest-after-vice-presidents-address/>

6 NDS1 para 863

7 On the Days of Darkness in Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, February 2019 at <https://www.hrforumzim.org/press-releases/daysofdarkness2/>

The world over, 2020 was a trying year due to the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic. In one of its first responses to the pandemic, the Zimbabwe Government declared a lockdown of movement and businesses. The pandemic and the subsequent lockdown had different effects on the economy and human rights situation. On the economic front, the economy slowed down and fears mount that it could contract by up to 20 percent by the end of 2020. Within no time, reports of rogue security service officials from the Zimbabwe Republic Police and the Zimbabwe National Army assaulting and torturing citizens were reported. Countrywide, there were reports that city council officials aided by the police were confiscating wares that were being sold by vendors and other citizens on the roadsides as they tried to make ends meet. On the health side, cases of rampant corruption in the procurement of COVID-19 drugs, health equipment such as testing kits and other needs started emerging. With regards social protection measures, the Government had quickly pronounced that it would provide social safety nets through cash handouts of ZWL\$300 per month as income support. This never came to pass for most people.

COVID 19 has also exposed the vulnerabilities of women due to the crisis. For instance, the informal economy which has been dealt a major blow by the lockdown means that most women who form the bulk of the entrepreneurs in that sector lost much needed income since the lockdown. The abrupt loss of income meant that most women who previously helped support their families financially are now unemployed. Furthermore, increasing cases of domestic violence due to spouses being confined at home have been recorded .

Unfortunately, the way the Covid -19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on peoples' livelihoods in Zimbabwe and across the globe shows that its effects will be more than just a health crisis but a major crisis for human rights, legal and economic justice . The NDS1 mentions the drastic effects of the Covid 19 pandemic but does not seem to provide any direct social safety nets or response mechanism to empower citizens to be resilient and adapt the shocks caused by the pandemic.

Excusing past failures to justify the NDS1

The Government wants to present an image that it has been all but clean and has not been involved in all of the corruption and brutal rights violations that has gone on in in the last three years it has been in power. The NDS1 is awash with excuses that COVID-19 and Cyclone Idai have been Zimbabwe's biggest detractors in terms of achieving economic progress. This is far from the truth. While Cyclone Idai affected parts of Manicaland in Zimbabwe, the economic disruption that occurred in the affected areas could have been managed if the Government had shown some level of seriousness in handling the disaster. That Covid 19, has ravaged economies across the globe, as well as Zimbabwe's industries such as tourism, retail and the export market is not in doubt. However, compared to the level of resources that are reportedly

8 Statutory Instrument 83 of 2020 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) Order, 2020 [CAP. 15:17

9 <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/zimbabwe/card/2XxB9GOV93/>

plundered and siphoned from the country on a daily basis it becomes unacceptable to accept the Government's excuses that Covid- 19 is the biggest cause of the economic downturn that Zimbabwe finds itself in. The NDS1 risks appearing like a propaganda document when it denies truths that are well documented. The government must acknowledge its debt and include in the plan a strategy for dealing with the past and holding itself accountable through empowering independent institutions

2017 and beyond: Enter the development plans of the Second Republic

Progressive states the world over have in one way or the other come up with plans that they have called national development plans (NDPs) seeking to project, plan, budget and measure the results of the different intended development initiatives over a set period of time. The Zimbabwe Government led by President Emmerson Mnangagwa has led the country since November 2017 when former President, Robert Mugabe was overthrown by the military on 17 November . President Mnangagwa, who was then, Mugabe's deputy had fled the country but returned soon after Mugabe had been deposed. A general election then followed and he was elected President in 2018 but not without controversy as opposition political party, the MDC Alliance led by Nelson Chamisa disputed the result. In a court judgement that followed the electoral dispute, the Constitutional Court in Zimbabwe ruled that the ZANU PF party and Emmerson Mnangagwa had won the elections and thus the matter was put to rest. The current government's record has been littered with little success in the way it has handled some excesses from the Mugabe regime but also been faulted for several blunders on the Government's part such as the brutal suppression of a fuel hike protest in January 2019, the continued arrests of civil society activists and journalists who have dared question the high levels of corruption by government officials as well as allegations of the President's family 's involvement in corrupt tender deals involving Covid 19 funds and procurement.

After the 2018 elections, President Mnangagwa set up a Cabinet as well as top Government brass that was made up of veteran ZANU PF loyalists as well as technocrats from the private sector and some from the diaspora. Part of this team includes individuals such as Finance Minister, Professor Mthuli Ncube formerly with the African Development Bank as well as Former Barclays Bank CEO, George Guvamatanga. These and several other reportedly top-notch experts have been spearheading development and recovery programs in Mnangagwa's government. The term of government for this current government ends in mid-2023.

¹⁰ Operation Restore Legacy was a military operation which ended Mugabe's presidency after thirty-seven years at the helm of the country and of the ruling ZANU-PF party.

¹¹ <https://ipi.media/zimbabwe-arrests-journalist-who-exposed-covid-related-fraud/>

¹² <https://www.iol.co.za/the-star/news/zim-presidents-son-in-centre-of-r17m-covid-19-supplies-scandal-49393435>

¹³ TNDP (198 - 1985); FFYNDP (1985 - 1990); ESAP (1991 - 1995); ZIMPREST (1995 - 2000); MERP (2001 - 2002); NERP (2003 - 2004); MEPP (2005 - 2006); ZEDS (2007 - 2011); STERP (2009); STERP (2010 - 2012); MTP (2011 - 2015 and ZIMASSET (2013 - 2018).

Introducing the NDS1

Zimbabwe has had 14 national economic blueprints since 1980 with different results. In a move that sought to break away from the traditional way of doing things post Mugabe, in September 2018, the Zimbabwe Government launched a development pathway which they called Vision 2030 outlining its ambitions and vision for the country. To cement the aspirations of the Vision 2030, the current Government implemented a reform process which they called Transitional Stabilization Program (2018 – 2020) which is credited for among other things, stabilizing the volatile exchange rate, fiscal consolidation and external sector balance. With the TSP coming to an end in December 2020, the government launched on the 16th of November 2020, a development plan which they are calling the National Development Strategy (NDS1) [2021 – 2025].

President Mnangagwa in his foreword lauded the NDS1 as *“the first 5-year medium – term Plan aimed at realizing the country’s Vision 2030, while simultaneously addressing the global aspirations of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Africa Agenda 2063.”* As he notes, the NDS1 is premised around four guiding principles and these are:

- **Bold and transformative measures that are not slow and that the people deserve.**
- **Development and capacitation of key national institutions to create an enabling environment for transformative economic growth**
- **Leveraging Zimbabwe’s competitive advantage by reconfiguring its Natural Resources management, increasing beneficiation on the country’s excellent ecological endowments as well as capitalizing on the populations’ skills base.**
- **Enhancing good governance practices**

President Mnangagwa’s Finance Minister notes that the NDS1 is hinged on an approach that seeks to connect national development planning supported financially through national budgeting and the able implementation of the government’s public service personnel. He goes on to even make a commitment that with the NDS1, national budgets “will only support programs, projects and interventions which contribute to the achievements of expected national outcomes and realization of national priorities as defined in the NDS1.

¹⁰ Operation Restore Legacy was a military operation which ended Mugabe’s presidency after thirty-seven years at the helm of the country and of the ruling ZANU-PF party.

¹¹ <https://ipi.media/zimbabwe-arrests-journalist-who-exposed-covid-related-fraud/>

¹² <https://www.iol.co.za/the-star/news/zim-presidents-son-in-centre-of-r17m-covid-19-supplies-scandal-49393435>

¹³ TNDP (198 – 1985); FFYNDP (1985 – 1990); ESAP (1991 – 1995); ZIMPREST (1995 – 2000); MERP (2001 – 2002); NERP (2003 – 2004); MEPF (2005 – 2006); ZEDS (2007 – 2011); STERP (2009); STERP (2010 – 2012); MTP (2011 – 2015 and ZIMASSET (2013 – 2018).

The NDS1 notes that through the broad - based stakeholder consultative process the following National Priorities were identified as in table 1 below: -

Table 1:

- Economic Growth and stability	- Food and Nutrition security	- Moving the economy up the value chain and structural transformation
- Infrastructure and utilities	- Digital economy	- Housing delivery
- Governance	- Social protection	- Image building, international engagement and reengagement
- Environment protection, climate resilience and natural resources management	- Youth, Sport and culture	- Health and well being
- Human Capital Development	- Devolution	

All the above-mentioned priorities are further elaborated on in para 100 – 125 of the NDS1. The NDS1 document covers all the above-mentioned topics extensively in 235 pages and then goes on to give a results framework in its annex covering another 70 pages. From identifying the number of the unemployed, the key vulnerable population groups, problems related to water, sanitation, health and those straddling to a lack of the document can be commended for stating the facts right in most instances. The NDS1 proposes to deal with several issues among others the deteriorating public investment in education as well as improving on the current education system by moving from the 3.0 system (Teaching, Results and Community Service to the Education 5.0 which adds (Innovation and Industrialization) to the learning curriculum.

14 <http://www.zim.gov.zw/index.php/en/government-documents/category/1-vision-2030#>

15 <https://zimbabwe.un.org/en/50093-zimbabwe-transitional-stabilisation-programme-2018-2020>

16 NDS1 paras 49 - 55

17 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

18 <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview>

19 NDS1 para 60

This paper seeks to analyze the contents of the NDS1 document using a community-oriented human rights-based approach. A community-oriented human rights-based approach enjoins the state to implement its programs ensuring that there is wide citizen involvement as well as universality, equity, transparency, accountability and participation. It further analyses segments of the NDS1 with a view to establishing whether the process of coming up with the document was consultative enough and also scrutinizes sections of the NDS1 to establish if the contents adhere to the standards for a reasonable, inclusive and representative national development plan. The paper goes further to give recommendations to the Government of Zimbabwe, the people of Zimbabwe as well as civil society groups on the best way to move forward with the development agenda set by the Mnangagwa's government from 2021 to 2025 through the NDS1.

1. What does consultation mean in the context of a national development plan?

An important document such as a national development plan needs to be extensively consultative so that the views of all stakeholders are taken into consideration. It does not mean however that the government has to talk to each and every citizen as that would be an impossible task especially in this era of Covid 19 restrictions. The principle is that the consultations need to be purposive, participatory and consultative. The question that ZimRights would want to pose to the Government is on the methodology that was used to consult Zimbabweans.

What the NDS1 says: Mthuli Ncube notes in the preface of the NDS1 that several stakeholders such as trade unions, employers, government organizations and others at all levels were consulted.

Commentary: As ZimRights, we are present in 10 provinces with over 250 000 members. None of our members remember being consulted by anyone over the NDS1. ZimRights is affiliated to 4 national civil society platforms. None of these were consulted or ever remember a public meeting over the economic planning process. One of the criticisms against TSP is that many people could not relate to it as they were not consulted. There was no public ownership of the plan. It appears the same mistake is being made with the NDS1. For transparency's sake, it would have been important for the Government of Zimbabwe to outline the methods they used to consult the stakeholders, when the consultations were done and possibly provide links to reports or online meetings that were undertaken to carry out those meetings. A Government that chooses not to listen to the people it is purporting to be serving has the potential to fail in the delivery of its development plans

2. The duration of the NDS1 goes beyond the life of the present government

NDS1 says: The time period for the implementation of the NDS1 is given as between 2021 and 2025.

Commentary: While generally it would not be an issue, the fact that Zimbabwe is headed for a general election in 2023 raises concerns over why the current government would want to proceed as if they will automatically have a mandate beyond 2023. Even if they were confident of a victory, an economy like Zimbabwe's would want to be handled cautiously with planning done in manageable phases. In this case, a 3-year development plan would have shown Zimbabweans locally and in the diaspora as well international financiers that the Government means well and takes into consideration such factors as the upcoming elections.

ZimRights Asks: What is the rationale for having a 5-year plan that straddles beyond the current government's tenure.

2.1 Financing of the NDS1

Chapter 17 of the Zimbabwe Constitution deals with the topic of Finance. Section 298 lists the principles that must guide all aspects of public finance in Zimbabwe. These include the need for transparency and accountability, national development focus of the public finance system, standards for fiscal reporting and responsible and transparent public borrowing.

NDS1 says: The NDS1 mentions that the financing of the development plan will come from "fiscal revenues, loans, grants, public entities own resources and private sector own resources".

Commentary: While on paper this information looks sound, it does not provide confidence to the average Zimbabwean. Sources such as fiscal revenues in a country that runs serious budget deficits is unreliable. Furthermore, it is common cause that the Zimbabwe Government largely operates and is dependent on high risk loans on the domestic and international markets. The concern is that with such high risk and high interest rate loans, there is no doubt that whatever gains are seemingly made in different sectors, they will soon be eroded by a failure to sustain the projects or gains as the Government in the end ends up using all its resources to pay off those loans.

One critical issue that is of major concern in this instance is that the Zimbabwe Government would seem to be acting in bad faith by giving with the right hand what it hopes to snatch with the left. For example, the NDS1 mentions "loans" as one of its possible sources of financing the plan. However, the NDS1 fails to acknowledge a political reality that has dominated parliamentary debates in Zimbabwe for a long time. One of the proposals in the Constitutional Amendment debates was that the Government through its executive would be given unfettered powers to solicit loans internationally and the legislature would not have a right to question or hold the executive accountable. These kinds of scenarios make it difficult to believe that the Government of Zimbabwe is sincere in proposing such plans. A plan that seeks to lift people out of poverty bankrolled by money that does not belong to the government, and which government cannot be held accountable is highly dubious and is bound to fail.

Furthermore, Zimbabweans are all too aware of several international loans that were borrowed by the current Government but whose results cannot be accounted for in present day. Back in the day, Zimbabwe borrowed funds from the Afreximbank running into several millions of dollars purportedly to back the Zimbabwe local currency. The conditions for the loans were never released to Zimbabweans but what is evidently clear is that the Afrieximbank capitalized on a desperate Government whose credit lines had been all but cut internationally. To makes matters worse, there are other locally sourced funds such as the one that was used to fund the infamous Command Agriculture. Reports soon emerged that the funds were never returned by senior politically exposed and politically connected individuals in ZANU PF and they had nothing to show for all the farming they had borrowed the funds for. Where the current government has been proactive is in then ensuring that the same loans are absorbed by the state and the burden of repaying passed on to citizens. By the end of 2019 Zimbabwe was reeling from external arrears amounting to USD \$8.0billion. *The NDS1 acknowledges a worse public moral hazard that is brought about when failed state enterprises filled with corrupt individuals perennially approach government for debt assumption.*

ZimRights Asks: How does the Government hope to protect the loans borrowed locally and internationally from abuse through corruption as well as ensuring that they are used for the intended purposes?

2.2 A national development needs to be costed to ensure predictability

A corollary matter on the issue of financing the NDS1 argument above is that the NDS1 is not costed. Whether this is a deliberate move or not is not clear.

Commentary: However, it is important to note that what would instill confidence in Zimbabweans and civil society is a government that would show clear budgets for its plans. While the results framework is clear on, for example what numbers of people need to be supported with food supplies or how many sports infrastructure projects need to be undertaken, what does not come out are the proposed costs to these mammoth projects. The perennial challenge with such kind of planning is that it leads to speculation and possible manipulation of costs when the Government decides to implement projects. Bar the fact that prices change globally, there is a fear that a government that does not cost its development plan could set itself up for failure.

ZimRights Asks: When will the Government avail a costed budget for the people of Zimbabwe to know how much it will cost them to achieve the development plans in the NDS1?

10 NDS1 Preface

21 NDS 1 para 888

22 Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act, 2013 [Zimbabwe], 22 May 2013, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/51ed090f4.html> [accessed 30 November 2020]

3. Monitoring and Evaluation of the NDS1

NDS1 says: (i) There will be a Monitoring and Evaluation team that will be based in the Office of the President to carry out the measurement of the livelihoods and economic transformative results such as the outputs, outcomes and impacts. (ii) The NDS1 notes further that, monitoring and evaluation reports will be produced and submitted to Cabinet for consideration and approval.

Commentary: One of the weaknesses with such a scheme is that while the measurement of the results is needed to show the President, the Cabinet and other interested stakeholders how each sector, Ministry and the governments agents will be performing, its independence is questionable. With this criticism comes the question of objectivity of the results and the personnel that will be carrying out such work. Several countries including neighboring South Africa have such measures in place but that does not ensure their efficacy or even make it standard practice to have monitoring and evaluation teams placed in the President's Office.

ZimRights Asks: (i) How will the independence of the Monitoring and Evaluation Department be protected considering that the Unit will be in more of a position where the executive will be assessing itself?

(ii) What is not outlined is how this process of monitoring and evaluation will be carried out or what the terms consideration and approval mean. ZimRights would want to know if these reports will be open for public consumption at all times and without censorship.

3.1 The need for a clearer results framework to measure the NDS1 results

NDS1 says: It provides for an extensive National Development Results Framework (NDRF) presented on page 236 – 300 of the NDS1 document.

Commentary: While the targets section of the NDRF is split into Annual plans for 5 years, the NDRF does not have the cumulative results for the whole 5-year period clearly set out in the document. The Government would have made it much easier for people to understand the expected targets after the five-year period rather than leave it to different interpretations because there is no one way of analyzing or understanding such documents. For example, under the Housing Delivery National Development Results Framework 2021 - 2025, the first Key Performance Indicator "Number of housing units delivered as a function of effective demand" has targets for 20,000 (2021); 40,000 (2022); 40,000 (2023); 50,000 (2024) and 50,000 (2025).

ZimRights Asks: There are issues that need clarification especially with regards how the targets are set in the document. For example, the question that needs answers is whether the Government expects to have built 200,000 housing units in the 5-year period? Another indicator which is in percentage and seeks to measure the "percentage change in households with access to social amenities is set out like this: 63% (2021); 65% (2022) and so on. The question is whether these measurements are being carried out on already existing infrastructure or the 49,870 baseline figure that is shown in the first indicator.

3.2 Devolved monitoring and evaluation

The NDS1 notes that the Provincial and Chiefs Council will be essential in the monitoring of the NDS1 at the lower tiers of Government. This is an important tool that places accountability right in the hands of the communities. However, there is need for caution to ensure that there is little politicization into the work of the government agencies operating in the different provinces and localities in the country.

4. Cross cutting issues – Youth and Gender

In Zimbabwe, 53.6% of the country's population is under 20 years and 62.9% of the country's population that is below 24 years. In 2019, of the 2.9 million people who were employed, 930 000 were formally employed and it would not be a total miss that the bulk of these people are employed by the Government. It is important to note that 19% of those in informal employment were in precarious employment and also in the age group of 20 – 40 years.

NDS1 says: The NDS1 mentions that “most youth in Zimbabwe have not embraced the culture of hard work and the principle that hard and honest work pays”.

Commentary: At best insulting and at worst insensitive, the above statement reveals the kind of condescending attitude that the Government holds towards its people and youth. In a country, where young peoples' hopes have been diminished to naught because of poor economic performance, high levels of corruption and political malfeasance it becomes difficult to understand how such analysis is reached and even approved by a Government that says it wants to get its people out of poverty. It is almost as if the Government lives in its own world and it sees its young people as a lot that is irresponsible, reckless, useless, lazy and dishonest. Without a change in such an attitude it is difficult to fathom a change or an achievement of better results as envisaged in the NDS1 for the youth of Zimbabwe.

It is not clear what the words “hard work” and “honest work pays” especially in a country where there is 90% unemployment and the bulk of corruption cases are alleged to be committed by very senior politically connected individuals in the Government and or the ruling party. The average age range of those that are known publicly to have been involved in “dishonest work” fall far from the poor

ZimRights Asks: ZimRights wonders what these youth are supposed to do to earn an honest living when the statistics and conditions are pitted against them in this manner.

23 <http://www.theopc.gov.zw/>

24 NDS1 Para 897.

25 NDS 1 Annex - 265

26 NDS 1 Para 735

27 <https://www.zimrights.org.zw/the-motlanthe-report/>

28 <https://www.zhrc.org.zw/monitoring-report-in-the-aftermath-of-the-14-january-to-16-january-2019-stay-away-and-subsequent-disturbances/>

5. The need to balance national priorities: international reengagement or the country's human rights record first?

NDS1 says: [on International relations] - "The advent of the Second Republic ushered in a strategic opportunity to improve the country's image and international relations – which in turn will provide leverage for the country to attract investment, promote economic growth and national wealth".

NDS1 says: [on the human rights situation] - The Government needs to observe international human rights standards as well as adhere to the Constitution. In this regard, the NDS1 suggest that the Government should support the Chapter 12 institutions. Chapter 12 of the Constitution provides for independent commissions that are mandated with among other objectives, the support and entrenchment of human rights and democracy, to promote transparency and accountability in public institutions as well as ensure that injustices are remedied.

Commentary: With regards the human rights situation in the country, the NDS1 is couched in such language that is seemingly self-serving and seeks to remove any culpability on the state. The mentioning of human rights violations in the NDS1 cannot be done as if the present Government is oblivious of the existence of the August 2018 killings of 6 citizens by the military nor the January 2019 brutalities meted by the security agents on citizens after the fuel price increase riots.

ZimRights asks: Zimbabwe's most precious resource is not gold, or diamond. It is its people. In his address during the ZHRC Strategy Meeting in November 2020, ZimRights Director, Dzikamai Bere pointed out that, "Zimbabwe's most precious resource are not gold, diamonds etc. Zimbabwe's most precious resource is its people, endowed with knowledge, expertise and great love for their country. And yet over 4.5million of them have left the country. Any development strategy that does not address the reason why the country is losing its most precious resource to the neighbors, is bound to fail." The argument here is human rights make Zimbabwe homely for its people. That is what turns around an economy. Not public relations.

For these commissions to effectively deliver their duties, they need to be adequately funded so that they can employ qualified staff as well as carry out their mandates without any hindrances and budgetary constraints.

6. Infrastructure

NDS1 says: The NDS1 notes that national infrastructure catering towards water, sewerage, power generation, roads, and other essential utilities has been deteriorating over the last two decades. For instance, the document observes that only 29.7% of Households in Zimbabwe have access to improved water resources . The TSP (2018 – 2020) noted that the housing backlog in Zimbabwe then stood at 1.25 million. Furthermore, the government admits that Zimbabwe is now 127/138 in the Infrastructure Index under the World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report. On the health front, the NDS1 notes that one of its strategies will be to implement water and sanitation programs through the Health Ministry.

Commentary: The NDS1 responds in para 566 and proposes the development of 164 195 fully developed stands and 49 870 completed houses. The uncoordinated and laissez faire approach by Government towards the housing problem is worrying. Private land developers and citizens have embarked on major projects stepping into a space that was largely occupied by Government or should have been the prerogative of Government at huge costs financially and causing potential damage to the environment. The NDS1 fails to put a costing to the amount of money that individual households have to part with when putting up facilities such as septic tanks, solar power facilities and boreholes to name just but a few. All this money combined could have improved citizens' buying power but because of the inefficiencies of the Government and its agents in providing safe drinking water, proper sewerage systems and reliable energy this money is lost in such a manner. There is no clear information on what the extent of environmental degradation will be for example due to the drilling of boreholes over small areas all over the country besides the depletion of underground water at alarming levels.

ZimRights Asks: . It is not clear whether the development of residential stands will be done by private contractors or the houses will be carried out by the government or individuals.

On water infrastructure, it is not stated how Government will ensure that water is provided to citizens through the Ministry of Health and Child Care and whether the Ministry has the expertise or the funds to carry out such activities.

Ease of doing business: Two years after the TSP, the Government continues to talk about its plans to achieve “Ease of Doing Business”. If the government has failed to achieve that in two years what makes it think it will be able to achieve that in the next five years? The NDS1 refers to the upholding of good governance principles and yet recently a Government Official noted that Government had started a “conversation” for a reduction and reuse models for residential stands in low density suburbs. Government should go ahead and invest in the development of new housing areas rather than argue for a stampede in areas that are already developed. On one hand, the Government calls for the enhancement of agriculture in the country through new models of farming, different financing models for example, a new land Bank. Besides noting that corruption must be dealt with, there are no extensive plans or directions to show that the Government is serious in fighting corruption besides the infamous “Catch and Release” process that has become the order of the day in Zimbabwe where suspected criminals are arrested, appear in court, are released on bail and then later on they are declared unfit to stand trial for health reasons or their cases are thrown out because of lack of evidence.

7. Recommendations:

Consultations: Government should have consulted citizens widely but this did not happen. The current NDS1 needs to be taken back to the people for proper, formal and more participatory consultations before it can be endorsed as the official development planning strategy for the next five years in Zimbabwe.. The records of such consultations also need to be made available to the people for transparency's sake. For civil society organizations such as the National Association of Non – Governmental Organizations, it is important that when such consultations and meetings are held on behalf of civil society there must be feedback most preferably in writing.

Aid Coordination and management: The NDS1 identifies the need for an e-based Aid Information Management System to collate and store data that will be used to plan and analyze information on aid receipts and needs. This is an important function that must be embraced by the Government. The international best practices require that aid flows into a country must be transparent and planned in consultation with all stakeholders . Such a system would need to be open and easily accessible to international funders and the general populace so that it becomes clear how much funds are getting into the country, from who and for what purposes.

Results Framework: The Government needs to have a separate document that explains each and every indicator and show how it will be measured rather than have inexplicable figures thrown in all over the document.

Monitoring and evaluation reports:

The reports must be made available to all interested stakeholders without prejudice or censorship of any sort.

Civil society groups in the different sectors need to come up with monitoring tools and mechanism that assist them in shadow monitoring the NDS1. At the end of the year, a consolidated report must be produced from administrative data and whatever information is availed to them by their constituents so that they can assess what government has achieved independently.

Corruption:

The Government continues to note that it is fighting corruption. Judging from what has transpired since this Second republic got into office, ZimRights is not convinced that Government and its different arms that are fighting corruption have met the people's expectations or even their own targets. Cases in point are the Covid 19 scandal that saw the former Minister of Health, Obadiah Moyo being fired for allegedly awarding a multimillion Covid 19 supplies unprocedurally. The first family was also implicated but they have continued to deny it. Recently a close associate of the ZANU PF regime was caught at the Robert Mugabe International Airport with 6 kilograms of gold in her handbag and she was later released on bail after arguing that she had carried the wrong handbag. So many other cases continue to come up and instead of the accused people being brought to justice, it is journalists exposing these matters that are getting arrested and spending more time in prison .

Enhance unity, cohesion and reconciliation in the country:

The NDS1 proposes among other things to support the financing of Chapter 12 institutions as laid out in Zimbabwe's Constitution. It is important that while this is openly done, the figures proposed must be realistic and that the independence of the institutions must also be respected. The NDS1 notes that the NPRC has a 10-year tenure. However, a court case continues to linger on the exact duration of the NPRC. It becomes difficult to understand how a Government can continue to proceed as if it is oblivious of the legal disputes on such matters. The Government must act in good faith.

Observe human rights standards:

The Government of Zimbabwe needs to respect the Constitution and its peoples human rights. For years, civil society has called on the Government to implement security sector reforms, allocate more funds to public service utilities and needs and pressure the security agencies to respect human rights standards in the Constitution and from international human rights treaties. This means that the Government also needs to ensure that it signs up to international Conventions such as the Convention Against Torture among others. The NDS1 notes that one of its key goals is international engagement and reengagement and this would be one way to show the Government's commitment to human rights.

Post Covid 19 response:

The Government of Zimbabwe needs to put in place robust measures to deal with the compounded crisis that is the health emergency, social crisis and deteriorating human rights situation in the country due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Recovery and Resilience programs, social safety nets and protection mechanism cutting across all critical sectors need to be implemented as a matter of urgency.

Creating better opportunities for the youth

The Government should as a matter of urgency create a conducive environment for its young people to thrive through the provision of good education, skills-based education, equip them with innovative ideas and skills as well as the creation of viable employment and entrepreneurial opportunities.

On the issue of providing a conducive environment for young people, the Government of Zimbabwe needs to take note of the rampant abuse of drugs by young people. ZimRights believes that the Government through its security agents has the wherewithal to control and stop the importation and local manufacture of such drugs. The drug rackets are well known countrywide and research shows that the drug pushers receive protection at the highest political levels. This kind of criminality needs to be nipped in the bud so that Zimbabwe's most potent resource – its young people are saved from the debilitating crisis of drug abuse.

30 <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2020/11/govt-moots-downsizing-stands-in-low-density-areas/>

31 <https://www.oecd.org/development/effectiveness/busanpartnership.htm>

32 <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2020/7/8/zimbabwe-health-minister-obediah-moyo-sacked-amid-graft-scandal>

33 <https://iharare.com/henrietta-rushwaya-arrested-at-airport/>

34 <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2020-11-03/zimbabwe-journalist-hopewell-chinono-arrested-on-new-charge>

35 NDS1 para 870 calls for the setting up of an independent Complaints Review Commission to ensure that all complaints against the police, army and other security agents are investigated independently and expeditiously.

