



## Anti-Corruption Trust of Southern Africa

Campaigners against corruption in the public and private sectors

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### Stealing from the State and Impoverishing the Nation: Zimbabwean Traffic Police Officers Pocketing Huge Sums of Money through Bribes at Checkpoints

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## Executive Summary

Corruption by Zimbabwean Republic Police (ZRP) traffic officers is worsening. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of October 2012, police officers manning checkpoints between Plumtree and KweKwe were paid bribe money for which they did not issue any receipts.

However, police officers between Plumtree and Bulawayo were more corrupt as compared to their colleagues between Bulawayo and KweKwe. They were paid bribes at six (6) of the seven (7) checkpoints, which constitute 85.7% prevalence. The 8<sup>th</sup> incident took place on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2012 close to Redwood between Plumtree and Bulawayo. There were five (5) checkpoints between Bulawayo and Gweru and only one incident of corruption was recorded at 11:24 a.m on 9 October 2012, when the driver was stopped for over speeding. The driver begged for forgiveness but the police officers demanded a bribe which he paid before being allowed to proceed. No receipt was issued. There were no incidents of corruption between Gweru and Kwekwe.

The sin of corruption is now deeply rooted to such an extent that the culprits are demanding bribes publicly as if it is normal to do so. This raises eyebrows on why they are not arrested since there is no secrecy about their dealings. It should be very easy for the ZRP management or administration and the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) to catch the culprits red-handed and prosecute them.

Furthermore, the number of random checkpoints (also known as flying checkpoints, mobile checkpoints, or hasty checkpoints) were too many, which significantly delayed and milked motorists. The bus departed Plumtree border post at 7:26 a.m and arrived in Bulawayo at 10:10 a.m, over a distance of 100 kilometers, and the delays emanated from police checkpoints where police officers were negotiating bribes.

In addition to the above, some police officers have accumulated wealth which they cannot justify against their monthly salaries. Using proceeds of corruption, some police officers bought personal vehicles and commuter omnibuses of their own which operate hassle free and some have bought houses to name but a few.

The findings also suggest that traffic officers share their daily bribe takings with their bosses in the offices, failure which they risk being transferred to non-lucrative assignments.

In its 2010 report named '**Mini-Assessment Report: Corruption by traffic police officers and vehicle drivers in Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe**', ACT-Southern Africa made the following recommendations:

- i. The governments should monitor their traffic police officers on a constant but irregular level to ensure that those involved in corrupt activities are caught and exposed;
- ii. Whenever possible, governments should lay traps and all those caught should be prosecuted and dismissed from the police service;
- iii. Anti-Corruption bodies should be empowered to deal with these kinds of offences to ensure that they augment the police, which in many instances cannot fairly investigate itself; and
- iv. Finally, laws, policy and practice should be established that encourage whistleblowers to come forward and report corruption, especially those that feel tempted to pay bribes.

In keeping thereof, the above recommendations are reiterated. However, the following specific recommendations are made:

### 1 Recommendations to the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe (GRZ)

- 1.1 The GRZ through its relevant authorities should take appropriate action to arrest the situation since traffic police officers are pocketing huge sums of money that should

have been significantly contributing to the national envelope and channeled towards national development. The GRZ's failure to take action would be self-defeating.

1.2 Establishing an elite unit to monitor the operations of police officers..

### 1.3 **Specific Recommendations**

#### 1.3.1 **Recommendations to the Management of the Zimbabwe Republic Police**

1.3.1.1 Establish guidelines for the setting up of checkpoints and check procedures must be developed in order to avoid becoming overly intrusive. In other words, checkpoints cannot simply be set up when, where and how police officers choose as is the current situation in Zimbabwean roads though not compromising the national security and safety from criminals.

1.3.1.2 Introduction of force numbers for all police for easy of identification and reporting of corrupt members by the public.

1.3.1.3 Regulate the number of checkpoints;

1.3.1.4 Educate motorists on checkpoint procedures, including their rights and obligations;

1.3.1.5 Monitor closely the operations of the traffic police officers whose life styles have changed but cannot be matched with their incomes;

1.3.1.6 Facilitate leadership renewal at the police stations country-wide through merit and not political affiliation as the case is now.

#### 1.3.2 **Recommendations to the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission**

1.3.2.1 Lay traps and investigate corruption by traffic police officers;

1.3.2.2 Set up a mechanism through which police officers declare their assets and sources of income.

#### 1.3.3 **Recommendations to Motorists**

1.3.3.1 Desist from paying bribes since it is criminal to do so;

#### 1.3.4 **Recommendations to members of the Public**

1.3.4.1 Document (through pictures, videos and reports) cases of corruption by the police and immigration officials and expose them through naming and shaming.

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## 1. Introduction

In 2010, the Anti-Corruption Trust of Southern Africa reported through its report titled '**Mini-Assessment Report: Corruption by traffic police officers and vehicle drivers in Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe**', that Zimbabwean traffic police officers were ranked as the most corrupt among its counterparts from Botswana and Namibia.<sup>1</sup> This was confirmed by looking at traffic officials who asked bribes along a trip from Namibia to Zimbabwe via Botswana.

Whilst progress has been made in arresting the problem, this progress is a drop in the ocean considering the prevalence of cases in which traffic police officers take bribes.<sup>2</sup> In order to check on progress made by the Zimbabwe Republic Police management, benchmarked against ACT-Southern Africa's 2010 findings, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October 2012, ACT-Southern Africa researchers travelled by public transport from Plumtree to Kwekwe in Zimbabwe with the sole purpose of witnessing acts of corruption between drivers and Zimbabwean traffic police officers.

Consequently this report zooms on the nature and extent of corruption witnessed from Plumtree Border post in Matabeleland Province to Kwekwe situated in the Midlands Province. In order to understand the nature and extent of corruption the researcher was disguised by the bus driver as one of the staff members of the bus company.

## 2. Methodology

The assessment was carried out through observations, and listening to discussions between drivers and traffic police officers. Furthermore, discussions were made with friendly police officers, drivers and passengers. Consequently, the findings are authentic and constitute a true reflection of the nature and extent of police corruption in Zimbabwe. The assessment though limited in scope gives an indication of corruption bedeviling the Zimbabwean police throughout the country.

## 3. Findings

### 3.1 Corruption between Plumtree and Bulawayo- 9 October 2012

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of October 2012, there were seven (7) encounters with the Zimbabwean traffic police between Plumtree and Bulawayo. Traffic police officers were paid bribes at six (6) of the seven (7) encounters, which constitute 85.7% prevalence. The 8<sup>th</sup> incident took place on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2012 close to Redwood between Plumtree and Bulawayo.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of October 2012, the Namibian registered bus departed Plumtree Border post at 7:26 a.m and arrived in Bulawayo at 10:10 a.m. The distance between Plumtree Border Post and Bulawayo is approximately 100 kilometers, which should take at least one (1) hour to drive but it took the bus almost 3 hours. Delays were attributed to the number of police checkpoints and negotiations for bribes. The following incidents of corruption were recorded between Plumtree Border Post and the City of Bulawayo:

- 3.1.1 **Incident One (1):** The bus exited the immigration and customs before 7:00 a.m and at exactly, 7:18 a.m, on the way out, three male police officers, including a Criminal Investigations Department (CID) official demanded ten United States Dollars (US\$10) or one hundred South African Rands (ZAR100) to allow the bus to leave the immigration area without being searched. The bus driver and the conductor resisted paying the bribe alleging that they had already paid immigration and customs officials. There were heated arguments until the bus was allowed to leave the immigration area but instructed to park outside the gate.

- 3.1.2 **Incident Two (2):** Pursuant to Incident 1 and at exactly 7:26 a.m, two uniformed police officers (1 male and 1 female) different from all those involved in Incident One (1) followed outside the gate and demanded payment of US\$10 or ZAR100. They negotiated with the driver outside the bus and were paid US\$5, which they received though they expected more. The bus driver was warned that in future he will risk more delays if enough bribe money is not paid.
- 3.1.3 **Incident Three (3):** At 7:28 a.m, they bus arrived at **another** checkpoint where a male police officer demanded a bribe, which the driver paid. In order to put pressure on the driver, the police officer demanded the driver's licence and the vehicle's registration books, which he kept holding, whilst demanding that the whole trailer be offloaded. In order to avoid all the inconveniences the officer openly demanded payment of US\$10, which he was given before giving the driver his drivers licence and the vehicle registration documents.
- 3.1.4 **Incident Four (4):** The bus arrived at another checkpoint at 7:49 a.m, where again the police officer demanded to see the driver's licence and the vehicle registration documents. He instructed the bus driver to follow him to a nearby tree where he was paid US\$5 before allowing the bus to proceed.
- 3.1.5 **Incident Five (5):** At 7:56 a.m, the bus was stopped at another police checkpoint, where a CID official demanded that he needed to search the bus and ordered that the trailer should be offloaded. The driver lied and argued that the trailer had been offloaded at the border and it was pointless to offload it again. The official insisted and he was paid US\$10 before allowing the driver to proceed.
- 3.1.6 **Incident Six (6):** At 8:39 a.m, the driver was stopped and asked to produce road permits which he did. Police officers did not ask for any bribe and the bus was allowed to proceed.
- 3.1.7 **Incident Seven (7):** The vehicle was stopped at 9:02 a.m and the driver was asked to produce his driver's licence and road permit which was done. The police asked for a bribe citing the need to avoid offloading the trailer. The drivers paid ZAR100 and he was allowed to proceed.
- 3.1.8 **Incident Eight (8):** On 20 October 2012 at 6:15 p.m and at a police checkpoint close to Redwood along the Plumtree-Bulawayo highway, a woman police officer demanded a bribe from a Namibian registered bus which she was paid. The driver inserted US\$ notes in the ticket book and was immediately allowed to proceed.

### 3.2 Corruption between Bulawayo and Gweru- 9 October 2012

- 3.2.1 **Incident One (1):** There were five (5) checkpoints between Bulawayo and Gweru. One incident of corruption was recorded at 11:24 a.m on the same date (9 October 2012) when the driver was stopped for over speeding. The driver begged for forgiveness but the police demanded a bribe which he paid before being allowed to proceed. No receipt was issued.

### 3.3 Corruption between Gweru and Kwekwe- 9 October 2012

There were no incidents of corruption recorded between Gweru and KweKwe among three (3) checkpoints that were mounted on the day in question. However, this does

not connote or mean that the traffic police officers are not corrupt. Discussions with motorists confirm that corruption is rampant.

### 3.4 Other findings

- 3.4.1 **Traffic police officers target foreign registered vehicles.** The Namibian registered bus was stopped at all checkpoints when other Zimbabwean registered buses were allowed to proceed hassle-free;
- 3.4.2 **Cases of possible conflict of interest:** Some police officers own commuter omnibuses, which operate without disturbances or interference from the police. Other operators are harassed and drained through the payment of bribes which makes business for non-police officers less attractive. Table 1 below captures a discussion between the researchers and an owner of a commuter omnibus.

**Table 1: Remarks from a Commuter Omnibus Owner<sup>3</sup>**

“There are many commuter omnibuses that are owned by police officers. These ones are not bothered at all. The behavior of the police is pushing us out of business so that their buses remain. My driver pays a minimum of US\$10 a day, which is a huge lose. They also own so many vehicles plying the local routes and the highway. This case must be investigated”

- 3.4.3 Traffic officers share their daily bribe takings with their bosses, failure which they risk being removed from the road;<sup>4</sup>

**Table 2: Discussion with a traffic police officer**

“Being a traffic police officer has a number of advantages. We can all clearly see that our traffic colleagues have better lifestyles though our salaries are the same. They take advantage of motorists who pay bribes in order to avoid being delayed on the road. We all want to be traffic officers but sometimes, it’s not easy since you should also try to please bosses before they can keep you on the road. Sometimes, these bosses are given their shares on daily bribes otherwise you risk being deployed to other departments”

- 3.4.4 Some police officers have accumulated so much wealth that they cannot justify based on their monthly salaries;

**Table 3: Discussion with a bus driver**

“When you are driving a bus and have a trailer the approach is to ask all passengers to contribute money, which will then be paid to immigration and customs officials to avoid delays. At Plumtree border post, we always pay a minimum of one thousand South African Rands, to these officials and we budget for at least US\$200 for traffic police officers from Plumtree border post to Harare. To us this is normal and the best way to proceed, instead of being delayed.”

## 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

In view of the above findings corruption by Zimbabwean Republic Police (ZRP) traffic officers is worsening. The officers manning checkpoints between Plumtree and Kwekwe were paid money but did not issue any receipts needed for accountability purposes.

However, police officers between Plumtree and Bulawayo were more corrupt as compared to their colleagues between Bulawayo and Kwekwe. The sin of corruption is now deeply rooted to such an extent that the culprits are demanding bribes publicly as if it is normal to do so. This raises eyebrows on why they are not arrested since there is no secrecy about their dealings. It should be very easy for the management of the Zimbabwe Republic Police and the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission to catch the culprits red-handed and prosecute them.

Furthermore, the number of random checkpoints (also known as **flying checkpoints, mobile checkpoints, or hasty checkpoints**) were too many, which significantly delayed and milked motorists through demands for bribes by police traffic officers. The bus departed Plumtree border post at 7:26 a.m and arrived in Bulawayo at 10:10 a.m, over a distance of 100 kilometers, and the delays emanated from police checkpoints where police officers were negotiating bribes.

In addition to the above, some police officers have accumulated wealth which they cannot justify against their monthly salaries. Using proceeds of corruption, some police officers bought vehicles and commuter omnibuses of their own which operate hassle free and some have bought houses to name but a few.

The findings also suggest that traffic officers share their daily bribe takings with their bosses in the offices, failure which they risk being transferred to non-lucrative assignments.

In its 2010 report named '**Mini-Assessment Report: Corruption by traffic police officers and vehicle drivers in Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe**', ACT-Southern Africa made the following recommendations:

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- vii. Anti-Corruption bodies should be empowered to deal with these kinds of offences to ensure that they augment the police, which in many instances cannot fairly investigate itself; and
- viii. Finally, laws, policy and practice should be established that encourage whistleblowers to come forward and report corruption, especially those that feel tempted to pay bribes.

In keeping thereof, the above recommendations are reiterated. However, the following specific recommendations are made:

#### **4.1 Recommendations to the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe (GRZ)**

- 4.1.1 The GRZ through its relevant authorities should take appropriate action to arrest the situation since traffic police officers are pocketing huge sums of money that should have been significantly contributing to the national envelope and channeled towards national development. The GRZ's failure to take action would be self-defeating.
- 4.1.2 Establishing an elite unit to monitor the operations of police officers.

#### **4.2 Specific Recommendations**

##### **4.2.1 Recommendations to the Management of the Zimbabwe Republic Police**

- 4.2.1.1 Establish guidelines for the setting up of checkpoints and check procedures must be developed in order to avoid becoming overly intrusive. In other words, checkpoints cannot simply be set up when, where and how police officers choose as is the current situation in Zimbabwean roads though not compromising the national security and safety from criminals.
- 4.2.1.2 Introduction of force numbers for all police for easy of identification and reporting of corrupt members by the public.
- 4.2.1.3 Regulate the number of checkpoints;
- 4.2.1.4 Educate motorists on checkpoint procedures, including their rights and obligations;
- 4.2.1.5 Monitor closely the operations of the traffic police officers whose life styles have changed but cannot be matched with their incomes;

4.2.1.6 Facilitate leadership renewal at the police stations country-wide through merit and not political affiliation as the case is now.

4.2.2 **Recommendations to the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission**

4.2.2.1 Lay traps and investigate corruption by traffic police officers;

4.2.2.2 Set up a mechanism through which police officers declare their assets and sources of income.

4.2.3 **Recommendations to Motorists**

4.2.3.1 Desist from paying bribes since it is criminal to do so;

4.2.4 **Recommendations to members of the Public**

4.2.4.1 Document (through pictures, videos and reports) cases of corruption by the police and immigration officials and expose them through naming and shaming.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Anti-Corruption Trust of Southern Africa (2010). Mini-Assessment Report: Corruption by traffic police officers and vehicle drivers in Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe. [online]. Available from: <http://www.kubatana.net/html/archive/demgg/101111actsa.asp?sector=DEMGG> [Accessed 22 October 2012].

<sup>2</sup> ZimEye (2011). 21 'Corrupt' Cops Suspended. [online]. Available at <http://www.zimeye.org/?p=34833>. [Accessed on 25 October 2012].

<sup>3</sup> Discussions with a commuter omnibus operator operating between KweKwe and RedCliff on 10 October 2012

<sup>4</sup> Discussion with a traffic police officer on 19 October 2012