



## **BALLOT UPDATE**

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## Introduction

The report covers the month of March with some developments continuing from previous months. As the political situation settles with the signing of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) and the finalisation of some of the outstanding issues, Zimbabwe experienced some relief and resumption of some services that had since collapsed. The last ZESN Ballot Issue circulated in February made an analysis of whether the prevailing environment was conducive to the conduct of free and fair elections and concluded that there is no hope for democratic elections without meaningful electoral reforms and a new people-oriented constitution. ZESN recommended that before any election is called for, an extensive review of electoral laws, laws and regulations governing the media as well as institutional reform of electoral bodies is paramount to enable a conducive electoral environment and further recommended a people-driven constitution. This report seeks to assess and analyse the political developments that have taken place at the national level including appointments and political balancing among the three major parties in Zimbabwe. The report also assesses political and social developments at community level in order to gauge the mood of voters to the developments in view of evaluating whether electorates are enjoying fundamental freedoms and human rights which will enable a free and fair election.

**Political appointments:** The appointment of 41 Ministers and 20 Deputy Ministers results in the ballooning of the executive to 61. Contrary to the 31 Ministers agreed in the Global Political settlement the 61 far exceeds an acceptable number to a country in economic down tail. Be that may, a political compromise had to be struck in order to bring about political and economic stability. A cursory cost-benefit analysis would indicate that it would be more prudent to accommodate all political players in the cabinet and sacrifice the economy than put economic consideration above political stability. The accommodation of other political figures in some political parties assists in the reduction of the number of spanners that will be thrown in the works. There however remains a group of political bureaucrats (Those who are senior administrators and are expected to be non-partisan but have been guided by their political affiliation in the dispensation of their duties) who continue to frustrate the political settlement as their loss becomes inevitable. These political spoilers are the worst enemies of the state as they derail the progress made so far and risk prolonging or starting afresh the political impasse that had bedevilled the country for so long for their own political and economic gains. The appointments indicate a lack of gender consideration as stipulated in the three political parties' election Manifesto and Guiding principles. ZANU PF appointed only 13% women to Ministerial posts and 5% to Deputy Minister Positions. MDC T appointed only 20% women to Ministerial positions and 10% to Deputy Minister Posts. The MDC appointed a whopping 33% to Minister Positions and a depressing 0% to Deputy Minister Posts. The three political parties fall short of the SADC Gender and Development Declaration which stipulates that states have to ensure that there are at least 30% women in political decision making structures by 2005. It is clear that the political rhetoric and commitments on women political empowerment have not been matched with action.

**Politics of the Balancing Act:** The delay in the finalization of the political settlement was possibly a result of the precarious balance that had to be struck in terms of the allocation of key ministries and their deputies as well as which ministries were to have deputy ministers and which ones were not going

to have them. A cursory look at the ministerial allocation would indicate that key ministries to the MDC T are service sectors like transport, housing and social amenities, economic sectors like energy and power development, science and technology, industry and commerce, sectors with means of production like mines and Mining Development, Energy and Power development, as well as justice sectors like Justice and Legal Affairs, constitutional and parliamentary affairs among others. ZANU PF's critical sectors are defence, lands and rural resettlement, agriculture, environment, media, women and youth ministries. The former sectors are central to their party policies and election manifestos and they have been used to mobilise voters with a promise to either access land or assured of permanent residency in pieces of land allocated to them. It is the basis upon which the party mobilises support especially from rural areas. The latter sectors of media, women, youth and local government are used to communicate party policies, ideologies and principles and the women and the youth have played this role with every election from independence.

In order to foster transparency, accountability and build a strong oversight mechanism, ZANU-PF Deputy Ministers were assigned to Ministries headed by MDC-T or MDC-M Ministers while MDC-T and MDC-M Deputy Ministers were assigned to Ministries headed by ZANU-PF Ministers. Pessimists would think that this will give all the three ministries particularly ZANU PF and MDC T the opportunity to snoop on the other party. However there are ministries that do not have deputy ministers and these are considered critical by the dominant party. ZANU-PF Ministries which do not have Deputy Ministers are Defence; Lands and Rural Resettlement; Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development; Environment and Natural Resources; Small and Medium Enterprises and Cooperative Development; Tourism and Hospitality Industry. MDC-T Ministries do not have deputies – Finance; Information Communication Technology; Housing and Social Amenities; Constitutional and Parliamentary Affairs; Science and Technology; Water Resources and Development. All the MDC-Ministries have Deputy Ministers. There is no Deputy Minister of Home Affairs, as Home Affairs has two co-Ministers because of the contentious issues surrounding the ministry. Although ministers and deputy ministers are guided by their ministries' policies and guidelines, personalities will also play a critical role in the implementation of ministerial activities. It would be interesting to see how Mr Roy Bennet and Hon Made will function, Hon Olivia Muchena and Hon Masaiti will work in the ministry of Women's Affairs, Gender and community Development and how Senator Chinamasa will work with Hon Majome. Another set of interesting appointments is Hon Obert Mpofu and Hon Murisi Zwizwai. Hon Chombo and Hon Zvidzai would also make an interesting development while Hon Shamu and Hon Timba are likely not to take each other for granted as both are strong personalities. The most interesting appointments are Hon Made and Mr Roy Bennet. It is hoped that personalities and party interest will not supersede national interest.

The **nine** Ministers of State also make an interesting analysis in that while this office is meant to have an advisory, oversee the implementation of office duties and representation function, some office bearers were meant to accommodate party cronies who otherwise would not have been accommodated. Ministers Flora Bhuka appointed to the Vice President Msika's Office, Sylvester Robert Nguni MP appointed to the Vice President Mujuru's Office and John Landa Nkomo appointed to the President's Office had been invited to the initial swearing-in ceremony but were informed that they would not be sworn –in as they were not on the agreed list. Minister Nkomo was appointed in order to

cure the dissenting voices within the ZAPU party and to make a public spectacle that the 1987 Unity Accord still holds. Critiques of the 1987 Unity Accord say that this shows the lack of commitment on the part of ZANU PF because former ZAPU cadres could have been allocated more powerful ministries to show real commitment instead of being reduced to carrying out office duties of the principle. Moreover, there were no former ZAPU cadres in the talks. Senator Gibson Sibanda's position remains precarious after MDC appointed one more than required. His position is a sad story from being President of the Labour organisation and overtaken by Mr Tsvangirai who took the party presidency and again overtaken by Mr Welshman Ncube and superseded yet again by Mr Mutambara, his story is that of decline as he now is not even sure whether he will be Minister of State or the worst case scenario is if he loses the Ministerial position and just remains an appointed senator who lost in the elections. Hon Sekai Masikana Holland appointed in the Prime Minister's Office as a close confidante and ally in the struggle for democracy, the Prime Minister believes she will give sound advice. The Minister of State Security Hon Sydney Sekeramai has to deal with issues of subversion, terrorism, insurgency and sabotage and will advice and reports to the President directly. These terms will have to be re-defined as they were used previously to arrest, detain and charge human rights defenders and opposition cadres. For the sake of progress and development, it is critical that there is a clear understanding and appreciation of the political settlement and any manipulation of the functions of this office will have a direct impact on the agreement.

Parliament has ballooned to 314, the House of Assembly increased from 210 to 214 and Senate from 93 to 100. Although this scenario is not desirable because of the economic impact on the national fiscas, it is a worthwhile political compromise that brings with it stability and development.

The appointment of ministers responsible for national healing is a positive development that will ensure that Zimbabweans resolve their conflicts and map a new way forward. The responsible ministers will be drafting the framework for healing and it is expected that the framework will define whether the approach will be restorative retributive, truth and reconciliation or justice.

### **Community Developments**

The following were general perceptions by communities on political, social and economic issues affecting them. The stated issues will have a profound bearing in the manner in which they will vote in the next election. It is also a platform to assess whether the government is implementing the provisions of its agreement. Perceptions on the GNU, healing and reconciliation, political tolerance, availability of basic commodities and the nature of the distribution and the accessibility and availability of basic services were sought. The following were the perceptions gouged:

**General perceptions on the Global Political Agreement in Harare:** The four provinces of Mashonaland East, West, Central and Harare have a positive perception about the Global Political Agreement. It is however disheartening that most communities remain unaware as to what the agreement actually entails. In Harare for instance, communities in the low income residential areas seem to have some appreciation of the agreement. Such an appreciation depicts some level of enlightenment owing to greater access to the independent media such as online publications and cable news which have tried to expose the realities of the agreement. Communities in areas like Mt Pleasant

and Greendale support the GPA on the basis of service delivery. Communities are glad that refuse is now being collected, schools have now opened and hospitals are now functional.

Communities in the low income earning residential areas like Chitungwiza, Mufakose and Glen View have also been positive about the GPA even though such positivity has been based on failure to fully appreciate what the agreement entails. Communities have exhibited excitement at the GPA and establishment of the inclusive government as they are now in a position to freely exercise their rights and freedoms such as assembly and association in some cases.

**General perceptions on the Global Political Agreement in Mashonaland Province:** In the extreme cases, the inclusive government has been viewed as an opportunity for retributive justice to be meted out on previous perpetrators of violence. Such practises were also recorded in other non urban constituencies such as Bindura South, Mutoko North and Murehwa South.

Other perceptions being linked to rural constituencies include the misconception that the political parties have merged. The MDC T has taken advantage of such a misconception and made massive headway in constituencies that were traditionally no go areas for them. In Marondera East, Mutoko constituencies and in Shamva South, reports have noted an upsurge in political activity by the MDC T through information dissemination. A lot of fliers talking about the inclusive government and the position of the party are being distributed by party structures in these areas.

**General perceptions on the Global Political Agreement in Matebeleland Provinces;** The long awaited consummation of the inclusive government has been met by mixed reactions of hope, positivity and relief on one hand whilst the other hand views it with cynicism, scepticism, mistrust and denial. In fact, while some people in Beitbridge, Gwanda, Binga, Bubi and Bulawayo have apparently expressed hope that the economy would be resuscitated following this development, to some it remains an unfulfilled dream. Some people remain cynical of the inclusive government considering the preceding happenings of the pre run-off period when a number of people had to endure harrowing experiences of beatings and torture at the hands of ZANU PF functionaries. Recently was the arrest of about 600 members of WOZA and MOZA for carrying out a demonstration on the 10<sup>th</sup> February, 2009. The arrest of 60 tertiary level students and the assault of 11 for the demonstrating on a hiked fee structure is a cause for concern as people expected more tolerance after the finalisation of the coalition government. Of further concern are the continued arbitrary arrests and abductions of civic society as well as political activists. Concern was also raised in areas like Plumtree and Gwanda on the size of the inclusive government where people feel that the current economic malaise bedevilling Zimbabwe cannot handle an executive arm of government of 61 Ministers.

**General perceptions on the Global Political Agreement in Masvingo and Manicaland Provinces:** In Gutu Central most people are praying that the government of national unity works in order to bring to an end the political and economic crisis bedevilling the country. However it was reported that that some ZANU PF supporters are unhappy fearing that there will be termination of government subsidies like agricultural inputs, fuel and food. In Chiredzi East, the District Administrator told war veterans in ward 31 to respect the councillor Kusari Murairo of the MDC T whom they had vowed to ignore until his term ended. In Chivi Central a meeting held on 20 February, 2009 by the community included war

veterans who urged people to work towards the success of the GNU. In Masvingo Central there were celebrations mostly from MDC T supporters when the government of national unity was formed. However, some youths in ward 31 declared that the unity was to their (ZANU PF) advantage as was the unity with ZAPU in 1987 where the latter was co-opted into former ZANU structures.

On 15 February ZANU PF held a feast at Muchakata business centre where four beasts were slaughtered. The feasting was in celebration of the Government of National Unity. Some senior ZANU PF speakers are alleged to have stressed that even though Tsvangirai was Prime Minister he was going to change nothing as he was only an office bearer while Mugabe had the power. In Mutare West reconciliation and trust among other things is building up due to the current government set up. In Churumanzu –Zibangwe, a senior ZANU PF official was alleged to have gone around denouncing unity with the MDC prior to the installation of Tsvangirai as Prime Minister. He is said to have alleged that the MDC being a puppet of the West could not be trusted. In Mkoba MDC T has been holding several rallies addressed by the MP Chibaya. The rallies are in connection with explaining the GNU and why the MDC T has joined. On 22 February the Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai addressed a rally at Mkoba stadium. ZANU PF has also been holding its own meetings in the area. It is hoped that senior party officials be more politically mature and educate the people on the merits of sustaining the agreement.

**General perceptions on Healing and reconciliation in Mashonaland and Harare:** In the reports received, not much activity is being carried out by NGOs or the inclusive government in relation to national healing and reconciliation. What is clear however is that communities have taken it upon themselves to engage each other through various initiatives. In Mashonaland East for instance, it has been reported that communities that lost property and livestock in Mutoko North proceeded to demand such property from people understood to have carried out the looting in the name of political support for ZANU PF. The victims of the looting demanded such property around the 13<sup>th</sup> of February 2009 and did so without using violence. Apparently it was only after some ZANU PF supporters refused to give up some of the property that violence broke out. However, after the property had been successfully taken back, the community held a celebration marking their reconciliation feasting on the livestock they had taken back.

The celebrations were however short lived as the police then intervened at the instigation of one ZANU PF leader in the constituency and arrested 54 people on allegations of extortion. The Murehwa magistrate recused himself from trying the innocent people and they had to be transferred to Marondera where they were found not guilty. The police further refused to release the people again on orders from “above” and they were taken back to Murehwa and refused access to legal representative from Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights. As a result of the arrests, the communities back in Mutoko have gone back to being hostile towards each other on political grounds. The efforts by the community to rehabilitate themselves have been disrupted by overzealous political leaders and an unprofessional police force that acts in a partisan manner.

In Mudzi South, it is alleged that MDC T supporters have gone on a rampage starting on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February 2009 brutally assaulting a former councillor Mr. John Karima and Caleb Kamhapa for having

sent names of MDC supporters to Muzezuru base established by war veterans, soldiers and youth militia for the purpose of assaulting enemies of ZANU PF during the run up to the June 2008 election. The matter was reported to the police but no arrests were made. Villagers of Musau Village in the same constituency went on to dissolve the ZANU PF dominated School Development Committees following the formation of the inclusive government. Headman Musau who had been stripped of his powers by the MP for the area, Mr. Kachepa, was reinstalled and supporters of ZANU PF interested in joining the MDC were urged to surrender their party t-shirts and membership cards.

In Mashonaland Central, on the contrary, community leaders have started to engage in dialogue through CIVNET organised initiatives. During the month of February alone, two crucial meetings involving the political leadership of both the MDC and ZANU PF were held. During the meetings held in Bindura and Shamva, the provincial leaders accepted responsibility for the violence that claimed lives and displaced entire communities in areas like Mt Darwin. The acceptance set the stage for the mapping of interventions to ensure that such a tendency is rid of before future elections. It was agreed that the political leaders would inform their constituencies on how the inclusive government would work and the position of political parties in relation to the issues of violence and political intolerance.

In Mashonaland West, ZIMCET created platforms for communities to dialogue around issues of national healing and reconciliation. Such meetings were conducted in Kariba and Hurungwe where entire communities converged and interacted through theatre and sport before accessing community relations in the aftermath of both the bloody June 2008 elections and the formation of the inclusive government. Communities are reported to have expressed a desire to work together for peace and tolerance and they challenged the political leadership in the respective areas to support such initiatives through practising political tolerance at the highest level in the province just as had been shown at national level through the formation of the inclusive government.

In Zengeza West the CCJP has embarked on a healing process targeting victims and perpetrators of the June 2008 elections. Through workshops held on the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2009 the church organisation hoped to create a platform from which victims and perpetrators could meet each other and talk about what happened. Other workshops were lined up for the end of February and the beginning of March 2009. Concerns have however been raised about the timing of these workshops and the absence of a substantive and competent legal framework to harness sustainable delivery of justice to buttress the reconciliation and national healing process.

National healing and reconciliation can only be sustainable if communities are allowed to engage each other on their own terms as they are the ones conversant with the background of their conflict and the reality of their relations. The imposition of methodologies for national healing and reconciliation may only manage the conflict and not transform it to make it sustainable.

**General perceptions on healing and reconciliation in Mashonaland and Harare\_Midlands, Masvingo and Manicaland Provinces:** In Mwenezi West, those who were victimised towards the June 2008 elections are still bitter and feel there is need for justice to be done. People in Zaka North are not happy that ZANU PF still seems to be benefiting a lot and the soldiers who beat them up

towards the June 2008 elections move around their communities freely. In Bikita West MDC T supporters are keen to see justice delivered citing the violence they experienced towards the June 2008 elections. In Makoni West, ward 16, suspected MDC T supporters took goats belonging to some war veterans saying that they were replacing their goats which had been taken away during the June run-off election. In Buhera Central MDC supporters are said to be taking their revenge on any persons seen wearing ZANU PF regalia. In Nyanga North several cases of MDC T supporters vowed to take revenge on ZANU PF supporters. In other instances ZANU PF supporters are being beaten. In Mt Darwin, it is alleged that the recent payment of civil servants through the vouchers' system included those who had perpetrated violence in the June run-off. Communities see this as payment of thugs who unleashed violence in communities moreover; they are not part of the civil service structure.

However, the Youth Forum as well as Zimrights held meetings on peace building in Masvingo at Flamboyant Hotel. In Churumanzu Zibangwe, CIVNET and LRF are said to be holding workshops with councillors, pastors, headmen and other leaders in a bid to train them on peace building. Gweru Agenda has also been holding meetings in Mkoba. These efforts are encouraged in order to foster reconciliation and national development.

### **General perceptions on healing and reconciliation on Healing and Reconciliation in the Matebeleland Province.**

There is a significant improvement in community relations throughout the province. Those known to have been perpetrating hate and hate language like the War Veterans and Youth Militia appear to have mellowed down which has resulted in most people being able to express themselves freely and publicly on issues of a political nature unlike before. Evidence of reconciliatory gestures and improved tolerance levels with people of different political persuasions are there and people are able to attend political gatherings together in a peaceful environment, for example in Bulilima East where ZANU PF councillors attended a report back meeting convened by MDC T House of Assembly member for the constituency. However in some areas like Binga North there are some disturbing reports of uncoordinated cases of intimidation on known MDC-T members. It is reported that one unnamed MDC-T Councillor was reportedly arrested and arbitrarily detained by ZRP for blaming the President publicly on the obtaining economic decline in Zimbabwe. Therefore in some pockets of the province, there remains a vestige of fear amongst the villagers which discourages them from expressing themselves freely.

**The Re-Emerging ZAPU in Matabeleland Provinces:** There have been reports from mainly Tsholotsho and Lupane that ZAPU led by Dumiso Dabengwa is re-organising itself and establishing new structures. The party has already held several meetings to that effect, but still remain mainly confined to the mentioned two constituencies, which were worst affected by the Gukurahundi massacres of the early 1980's. ZAPU was scheduled to hold its first congress in March, 2009 but had to postpone it to a later date, possibly early May due to what their spokesperson Effort Nkomo said were logistical reasons, as quoted in the Zimbabwe Independent of 13 March 2009. Issues of reconciliation and healing will be incomplete if they omit the atrocities of this era.

**By-elections;** Meanwhile the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) has reiterated the provisions of the Global Political Agreement that should there be a candidate outside the parties that agreed; who

wishes to contest in an election, ZEC will be mandated to call for an election. The party which won the constituency in the previous election will nominate a candidate to the election. In other words, independent candidates and others from political parties which were not part to the GPA are still free to contest in by-elections. There are currently seven by-elections pending finalisation. The President promised an election after two years and after the conclusion of a new people –driven constitution. Meanwhile, a parliamentary select committee to drive the constitution making process has been set up. The party still remains to be seen whether it will transcend regional and tribal lines.

**Political Tolerance Midlands, Masvingo and Manicaland Provinces:** In Masvingo North and Mwenezi West people seem to be developing political tolerance as people of differing political parties are said to be able to express themselves freely. In Mutasa South there were demonstrations over the arrest of Roy Bennet. Mutare Central had ten MDC T supporters arrested as they were accused of encouraging other MDC T supporters to destroy property so that Roy Bennet could be released; Mr Bennet has since been released on bail. In Mberengwa East there is lack of tolerance but Chiredzi East, Chivi Central are currently calm. In Gutu Central and Churumanzu Zibangwe members of the MDC T are beginning to move freely wearing their party T-shirts. In Chiredzi West ZANU PF is said to be continually holding rallies for senatorial elections. It is urging people to go and vote for their candidates at the primary elections to replace the current Governor for Masvingo, Maluleki.

In Matabeleland province, notable improvements have been reported on tolerance levels during political meetings. Following the second round of elections in June there have been low levels of political meetings and rallies. It is mainly the meetings by councillors in various districts like Bubi, Umguza and Tsholotsho which took place. In Bulilima East the local MP Norman Mpofu is reported to have held a report back meeting on 19 February 2009 at Dingumuzi Hall with most people from different political backgrounds attending.

### **State Resources and Relief Efforts By Civil Society**

In Bikita West, Chief Marozva allegedly obtained seeds from the GMB for distribution yet he gave them to his immediate family and top ZANU PF members only. In Chivi South, it is alleged that Irvine Dzingirai, a ZANU PF MP was arrested at Ngundu business centre for converting the maize he had been given money for by the people so as to buy for them, to his own benefit. He had resurfaced at Ngundu business centre after some months and selling the same maize at exorbitant prices to other people. In Chirumanzu South, Oxfam and Care are giving people food aid. In Chipinge Central the MDC T is said to have bought food which it distributed to its supporters. Violence and scrambling occurred as the actual beneficiaries could not been easily determined.

In Zaka Central, Gutu North, North, Care International is said to be distributing food to the people. In Zaka North, ward 4 animosity and chaos arose when an MDC councillor suggested there be a need for a new committee to distribute food under Care accusing the previous one of having ZANU PF members only. In Zaka North seeds and fertilizer donated by SADC is allegedly going to ZANU PF supporters only through Musarava a ZANU PF Maguta Project Coordinator. Care and Oxfam are giving out food in Chivi North. A councillor for ward 2, Owen Mudzivo is said to have got maize meal at the GMB and allegedly sold it at exorbitant prices to the people in his ward. Several other councillors in Chivi North

who got inputs from the GMB meant to help farmers in their areas ended up distributing it to their families and friends.

**Availability of Basic Commodities:** Availability of basic commodities has greatly improved. In Marondera East, the inclusive government has been credited with the improved supply of basics such as mealie meal, sugar and bread. In Mudzi North, communities can now access basic commodities at reasonable prices owing to the removal of price controls and the liberalisation of the economy by the new government. In areas like Rushinga and Shamva in Mashonaland Central, communities have been quick to link the influx of basic commodities to the MDC T joining government.

In Harare, the availability and affordability of basic commodities has greatly improved. According to statistics given by the Ministry of Finance, the affordability of basic commodities has been enhanced by the liberalization of the economy. The price of a 10kg bag of mealie meal has dropped from nearly US\$20 in December 2008 to nearly US\$7 in February and USD 4 in April, 2009. It is anticipated that such drops will continue as the year progresses and the business community gains confidence in the inclusive government.

The BACCOSI programme by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe is no longer being reported in the reports received. However the programme has been dogged by controversy with a number of prominent individuals being arraigned before the courts for corruptly benefiting from the programme. There are court cases pending with companies being accused of benefiting from the programme after being awarded tenders to supply the food packs and later failing to deliver when they would have received payment.

The supply and distribution of agricultural inputs has also been marred by controversy with a number of high profile individuals being sought after by the police in connection with fraud and corruption. The Anti Corruption Commission has been instituting investigations in the programme after the commencement of an audit called for by the Reserve Bank Governor in mid February 2009. Arrests have also been made and there are implications that sitting ministers may be called upon to clear some of the issues that point to the politicisation of the programme. Accused persons have reportedly implicated ZANU PF leaders as those who sent them to collect fertiliser and seed in the name of campaigning for the party during the 2008 elections.

Agricultural inputs have also become the target of retribution attacks by MDC T supporters which primarily insinuates that the programme benefitted one political party at the expense of others. It is fortunate that there have not been any reports of distribution of agricultural inputs and the distribution of food aid has largely been conducted in a non partisan manner.

Organisations such as the Catholic Relief Services are providing aid throughout Mashonaland East and political interference has been avoided in all the cases that have been reported. Political parties have not been distributing food to their supporters but there have been isolated cases of victims of political violence receiving some food hampers in Mashonaland Central and Mashonaland East.

On the National front, month on month inflation has been reported to be declining for the first time since July, 2006. This has resulted in the decline in food prices due to a new regulation that allows the use of foreign currency as legal tender. While the dollarization of the economy has released tension among some, others are struggling to eke out a living as the dollar is difficult to come by.

**Availability of basic commodities in Matabeleland Province:** The food situation in most constituencies remains dire. Most families no longer afford a basic meal not only because of poor yields in the previous agricultural season, but also because of the adverse effects of dollarization and poor rains this year. In Bulilima East and West as well as Mangwe NGO's like CADEC, World Vision are providing food aid regularly, as opposed to erratic and largely partisan supplies from the GMB. Partisan distribution of food and agriculture inputs continues in some parts of the province.

### **Provision of Social Services**

The delivery of social services has vitally improved since the inception of the inclusive government. The education sector alone has witnessed an unprecedented overhaul with massive incentives being offered to teachers to return to schools and start teaching and marking examinations. The incentives include an amnesty to all teachers that had left the profession since January 2007, the introduction of allowances of US\$100 and the payment of marking fees in foreign currency. However, the incentives must be sustained to keep morale high and avoid disruption of services. Civil servants received their March salaries late which is a worrisome development.

It is important to note that as late as January 2009 schools in constituencies such as Makonde, Chinhoyi, Mutorashanga, Uzumba, Seke and the Mutoko had not opened their doors to pupils. The reason for the failure to open ranged from the victimisation of teachers by supporters of ZANU PF, to inadequate salaries offered by government. As a result it was estimated that the education sector was operating at below 20% of its full capacity with less than 70 000 teachers attending to students.

At the tertiary level the situation had, prior to the formation of the inclusive government, been made worse by the charging of fees in excess of US\$700 rendering education beyond the reach of most university students with rural backgrounds. However the reduction of such fees saw the easing of pressure on parents and students and the opening of most tertiary institutions. Furthermore the instruction to allow students to learn even if they had not paid the required amounts also eased pressure on parents and students. However students continue to complain that the average of US\$300 being requested for students as fees is still far beyond their parents' reach especially when one considers that civil servants are only getting US\$100 per month. Demonstrations by university students on 3 February, 2009 against high fees resulted in 11 being assaulted and others arrested.

The opening up of schools has been applauded in Mashonaland Central with reports from Bindura North and Shamva South indicating that parents are happy about the performance of the Minister of Education and the efforts being made by the inclusive government towards ensuring that the right to education is protected and afforded. However in Mashonaland East in constituencies like Uzumba, Maramba Pfungwe, Mutoko North and some parts of Murehwa, schools are yet to be opened as there have not been any guarantees that the teachers who fled the violence of June 2008 will not be

persecuted by ZANU PF militias that have still not accepted the inclusive government. It has also been reported that some of the returning teachers have become targets for political violence in Mutoko South and schools have remained closed in such instances.

The health sector was also badly affected by the governance crisis that bedevilled the country since the catastrophic June 2008 elections that the entire system was literally in intensive care. After the formation of the inclusive government and the introduction of allowances in foreign currency by government to civil servants, health workers began to return to health institutions. In Harare, medical supplies to Harare Hospital and Parirenyatwa increased and nurses who had been on strike returned to work. In Mashonaland West, some clinics in Makonde and Mutorashanga are yet to be opened fully because of lack of medical supplies but health personnel have returned to work.

The conduct of the police has overallly improved with arrests being made in cases where crimes have been committed. In the exceptional cases noted above were 54 people where arrested for claiming back their property looted during the June 2008 elections, the interference in police work by politicians and the failure by the police to remain professional is particularly worrying. In the rest of the provinces, the police have not tried to interfere with victims of June 2008 violence reclaiming their property from ZANU PF supporters. In fact, in Shamva South the police have cautioned the ZANU PF Member of Parliament after he made derogatory remarks in reference to the Prime Minister at a rally on the 21 of February 2009. He was also warned against making threats to supporters of the MDC T and there was a call for political tolerance at the rally.

In Chipinge Central MDC T councillors went around repairing roads that had been badly damaged. Mkoba constituency is said to have gone three weeks without water, raising more cholera fears. In Buhera West Doctors without Borders (MSF) and World Vision are helping people through provision of medicine and food. In Gutu North, ZANU PF allegedly collected money from several people saying it would buy food which it never did. In January and February soldiers in Chipinge Central allegedly forced shop owners to give them goods.

The death of the Prime Minister's wife Mrs Susan Tsvangirayi on 6 March in a tragic car accident and of Retired Army General Vitalis Zvinavashe on the 10<sup>th</sup> March and that of the Deputy Prime Minister Thokozani Khupe 's mother, Ms Catherine Mabhiza saw people from all political parties uniting and consoling each other. This reflected well on the global political agreement and showed that Zimbabweans are capable of working together.

On the international level, the U.S Ambassador to Zimbabwe Mr Mc Gee noted that Zimbabwe is not ready to have sanctions lifted against it. He noted that both individual and parastatal sanctions will only be lifted if there is evidence that the government of national unity is working. His major concern were new farm invasions. He also cited the "disappearance" of 13 political activists whose whereabouts are still unknown. He hoped that a new constitution will be put in place in 18 months and democratic elections held in 2 years. The new President of the United States Of America Barak Obama who was expected by the Zimbabwe government to "understand" and help the situation in Zimbabwe has extended sanctions for a further one year and then make a fresh assessment thereafter. This is not

surprising because USA is governed through foreign policies that determine the relations between it and other states. It is not the personal idiosyncrasies and whims that determine a change in foreign policy but rather national interests and priorities. The USA stands on the principle of democratisation and observance of human rights in order to advance financial aid and a change in administration rarely changes foreign policies.

The Norwegian Minister of Environment and International Development Erik Solheim visited Zimbabwe to assess the country's political and humanitarian crisis. The envoy also met with the Finance Minister Tendai Biti and Foreign Affairs Minister Simbarashe Mumbengegwi. His visit came a week after the Danish government sent its Minister of Cooperation and Development Ulla Tornaes to Harare on a consultative mission before re-engaging the country. The IMF team also made a similar visit. On 7 April, 2009 the South African business support team also visited Zimbabwe for economic recovery support. It is hoped that the visits will result in funds being channelled to Zimbabwe for re-construction.

The Short Term Emergency Recovery Programme (STERP) rolled out by the new Finance Minister Hon Tendai needs regional and international funding for its full implementation. This is why Zimbabwe needs to put its politics right in order to pave way for economic recovery. The SADC Summit on aid to Zimbabwe may help boost economic growth in the country.

**Conclusion**

ZESN continues to call for electoral reforms alongside the drafting of a new people-driven constitution. It is only a level playing field that can produce a free and fair election. It is hoped that the drafting of a new constitution that initiated will be inclusive.

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