

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AS A PATHWAY TO TRANSFORMED AND PEACEFUL SOCIETIES

GOVERNANCE AND
DEVELOPMENT IN ZIMBABWE





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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ASGM	Artisanal Small Scale Gold Mining
ASGMers	Artisanal Small Scale Gold Miners
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
GDP	Gross domestic product
GNU	Government of National Unity
HDI	Human Development Index
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JOMIC	Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
ONHRI	Organ for National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration
TSP	Transitional Stabilisation Programme
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZISCO	Zimbabwe Iron and Steel Company

SUMMARY

This research document investigates the role of human development as a pathway to a transformed and peaceful Zimbabwe. It shows that the quality of governance and its impact on development outcomes matter. Periods of poor governance have exacerbated economic decline, eroded trust and fractured social cohesion. A brief exception was the period between 2009 and 2013, when the country was governed by a government of national unity. In that time, the country made marginal progress towards inclusive development. Trust within society and between state and society briefly rebounded. For this short period, evidence of fertile grounds for social cohesion existed.

However, the past decade has seen a return to economic decline and the inequitable distribution of resources. Poor governance has eroded trust and competition for scarce resources has intensified. The country finds itself overly reliant on the informal sector, which has little in the way of protection against shocks. As such, a youth bulge, combined with high unemployment, risks tipping a fragile peace into pockets of instability that might spread. Poor governance has led to human development deficits and unequal resource distribution. These matters need to be addressed with urgency if Zimbabwe is to progress towards sustained social cohesion and peace.

INTRODUCTION

At the time of its independence, optimism abounded about Zimbabwe's potential to become a model African state that would leverage its abundance of natural resources towards the creation of a truly inclusive society. Sadly, in the latter part of the 2000s and for much of the 21st century, the country was plagued with poor governance that resulted in precipitous economic decline. These grim realities inhibited the state's capacity to sow the seeds for human development, which in turn resulted in trust deficits between the state and society. This paper examines these dynamics in the first two decades of the 21st century. From 2001, the economic fortunes of Zimbabwe took a turn for the worst. Studying this period is thus essential for understanding the constraints on prosperity and peace that impact Zimbabwe today.

In 2009, a temporary improvement in government performance and economic progress strengthened popular trust in the state, with positive knock-on effects for social cohesion. However, this brief uptick in the country's fortunes was short-lived. In the decade that followed, governance

again deteriorated, the economy once again imploded and, as such, little progress was made in terms of human development. Today, the country remains in a fragile state, characterised by chronic poverty; high levels of formal unemployment, resulting in an over-reliance on the informal economy; a virtually bankrupt state; and endemic corruption. Declining state capacity not only translated into weakened relations between the state and society, but, due to greater competition for resources, also greater polarisation within society. These fault lines were exacerbated in 2020 by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Ultimately, this state of perpetual fragility for a country with trust deficits and a population left to fend for itself has fractured social cohesion and continues to threaten social and political stability. With millions facing economic marginalisation, the informal economy (with its own inherent vulnerabilities) has been the only means to earn a living. Zimbabwe now looks to the next decade where a decidedly young and unemployed population has to navigate declining living conditions that result in increasing vulnerability. It could be argued that this material decline might result in a

concurrent increase in violation of the rule of law, either through crime or violence, as a means of survival.

Although necessary, a poorly managed land reform process, which largely occurred outside the bounds of the rule of law, has slowed development progress and spurred inequality, vulnerability has more recently forced people towards an emerging and violent illicit economy. The state's land reform failure created a normative precedent for the present-day contestation for scarce resources in Zimbabwe. Illegal mining is one manifestation of the breakdown of the rule of law. Competition over scarce resources, low levels of human development and few opportunities in the formal economy have

resulted in an influx of youth, politicians, gangs and other actors engaging in the illegal economy, where people are embroiled in violence, with tensions arising between various groups of actors. The preceding mentioned developments, sometimes the only means for ordinary people to earn an income, are resulting in huge revenue losses for the state and also environmental degradation in local communities. The situation not only requires urgent attention, but also demonstrates the dangers that lie ahead for Zimbabwe if the country continues on its current trajectory. Without improved governance, inclusive development and progress towards human development, social cohesion and stability will continue to hang in the balance.

SECTION ONE

Good governance and
human development
as indivisible objectives
in Zimbabwe

INTRODUCTION

This section discusses progress towards human development in Zimbabwe from the turn of the new millennium, which marked a turning point for the economic fortunes of the country. Three epochs are compared: the period from 2000 to 2008 that preceded the Government of National Unity (GNU); the period from 2009 to 2013, during the GNU, where advancements in human development were registered; and the period after the GNU, from 2013 to 2020.

Human development and national stability have always been inextricably subject to the nexus between political stability and economic growth

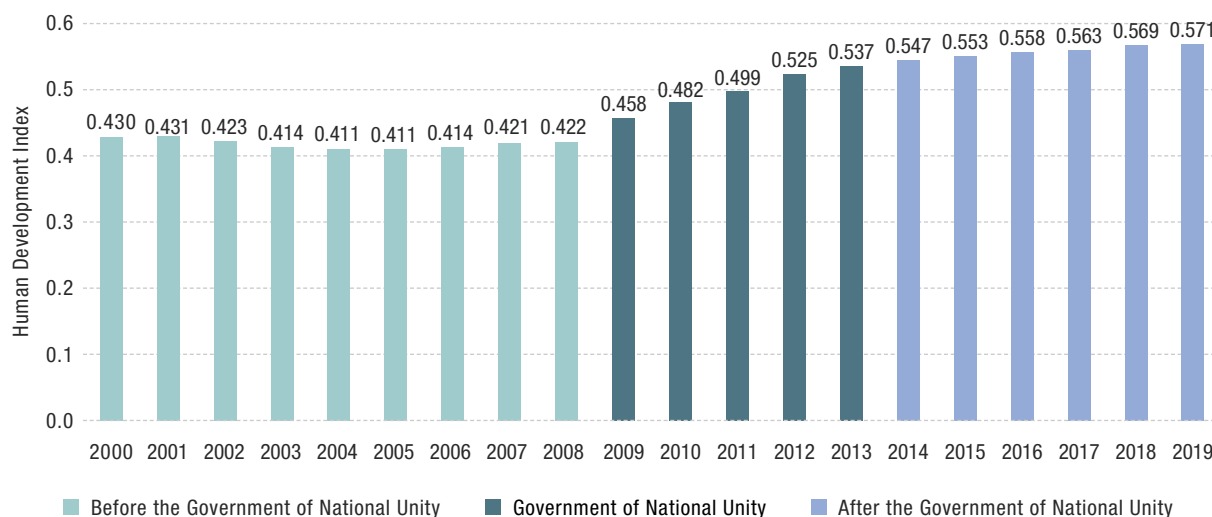
In Zimbabwe, human development and national stability have always been inextricably subject to the nexus between political stability and economic growth. Figure 1 shows the Human Development Index (HDI) for Zimbabwe over the last two decades, with the

three time periods under examination marked in blue, green and yellow respectively.¹ Between 2000 and 2008, there was a -0.01 change in Zimbabwe's HDI score; under GNU from 2009 to 2013, HDI increased by 0.08; and since 2014 it has improved by only 0.02 points.²

Governance before the GNU

From 2001, the country's economic fortunes took a turn from bad to worse. The period between 2000 and 2008 should be discussed within the context of what Lloyd Sachikonye has referred to as 'Zimbabwe's lost decade'.³ Beginning in 1998, this decade saw the economy shrinking from US\$9 billion to US\$4 billion.⁴ Imports skyrocketed and eclipsed exports by a substantial margin. This resulted in a significant drain on the country's foreign exchange reserves. The net effect of low inflows of foreign currency to a developing country that relies on the importation of essential economic inputs and essentials like fuel, medicines, raw materials and food was dire to human development. The immense economic challenges incurred from 2000 to 2008 were characterised by

FIGURE 1: Human Development Index



Source: Human Development Data, UNDP

shortages of food, fuel, medicines, jobs, de-industrialisation, hyperinflation, increases in extreme poverty and loss of people's savings and pensions.

The issue of poor and erratic governance resulted in economic instability and human vulnerability

In 2008 the country's gross domestic product (GDP) had declined by 17%;⁵ inflation was at 89.7 sextillion percent, rendering the local currency virtually worthless;⁶ extreme poverty was at 72%;⁷ and industrial utilisation capacity had dwindled to 8%.⁸ This reality was created by several competing factors, including corruption, neopatrimonialism, clientelism, political paternalism and a culture of violence.⁹ However, transcending all these factors was the issue of poor and

erratic governance that resulted in economic instability and human vulnerability.

Figure 2 shows six different governance measures used by the World Governance Indicators (WGI) of the World Bank. These are measured on a scale from an excellent score of 2.5 to a weak score of -2.5.¹⁰ Before 2008, all Zimbabwe's indicator scores, excluding political stability, were on a steep downward trend.

The debilitating effects of the governance crisis in Zimbabwe have ultimately limited the country's capacity to deal with its internal contradictions and its ability to engage with the international community as a trustworthy partner. The management of the country's land issue is a case in point. While it is public knowledge that historical land imbalances were skewed in favour of a minority of white farmers and needed to be redressed, the politicised and

SECTION ONE

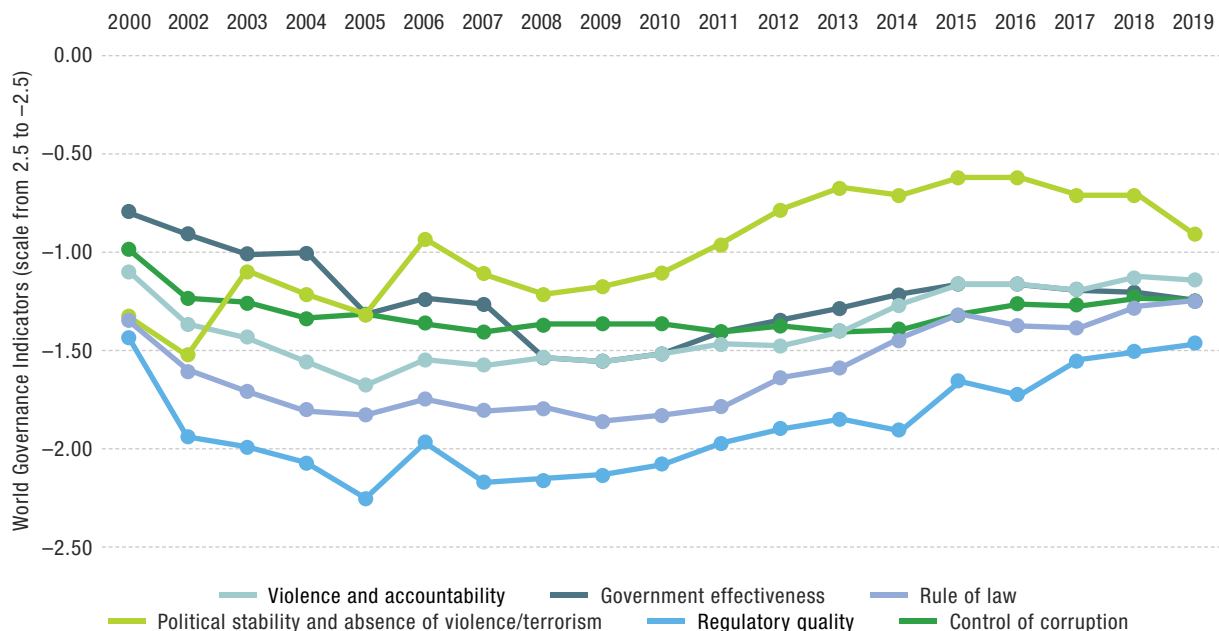
haphazard manner in which the process was implemented catalysed and deepened the country's economic crisis.¹¹ This left the country, once a regional breadbasket, with high levels of food insecurity, and deprived it of much-needed foreign currency. At the same time, most black farmers occupied agrarian land without clear tenure or capacity to use it productively.

The governance crisis in Zimbabwe was also reinforced by a culture of violence, toxic politics and intolerance against competing political formations – factors that contributed to human underdevelopment and depleted social cohesion. The country seemed to have resorted to what Karl referred to as electoralism, where elections are merely a ritual that is conducted religiously as and when they are due, but they do not serve the purpose of producing an accountable

government or leaders.¹² If anything, elections exacerbated divisions in the body politic by producing questionable electoral outcomes and unaccountable leaders with serious legitimacy deficits.

Towards the end of 2008 the Zimbabwean state had become so incapacitated that it failed at providing essential public goods and services like health, education, social protection, clean water and basic infrastructure. Social protection became non-existent and the combination of unemployment and hyperinflation drove extreme poverty to unprecedented levels. In addition, hyperinflation had left most citizens poorer and transport infrastructure was reduced to a state of disrepair. As a result of its multiple failures and increasingly repressive nature, the state in Zimbabwe became feared rather than trusted.

FIGURE 2: World Governance Indicators



Source: World Bank, World Governance Indicators

As the majority of Sub-Saharan African countries became part of the 'Africa rising' narrative of the early 2000s, Zimbabwe spent much of that time battling negative growth. By the end of 2008, Zimbabwe had failed to capitalise on the resource-driven commodity boom of the 2000s and found itself in a climate of mounting political and economic instability.

The Government of National Unity

The GNU came into being on 15 February 2009. It amounted to a political working arrangement, mediated by former South African president Thabo Mbeki, between the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the two Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) formations, following the disputed and violent presidential election runoff in June 2008.¹³ By the time the GNU got to work, human development was under severe strain (Figure 1), which meant that from the outset it had to deal with a rapidly unfolding economic crisis with the potential for severe political repercussions.

The GNU's first and perhaps most important step was to restore a margin of public trust and confidence in the state, at least temporarily. For reasons noted earlier, public trust in the state had been decimated. This was evident from data collected in 2005 by Afrobarometer, Africa's most authoritative public opinion survey into issues of political and economic governance. In this round of the survey, a third (34%) of Zimbabweans said they did not trust their president 'at all'.¹⁴ By the time GNU was firmly in place in 2012, this number halved to 17%.¹⁵ Pragmatic

decisions such as the demonetisation of the Zimbabwean dollar as legal tender, and the formal adoption of a basket of currencies, led to dollarisation and quickly ended hyperinflation.¹⁶ Basic commodities like food and fuel became available again, albeit at excessive prices, and public sector workers who received salaries again returned to work.

The GNU's first and perhaps most important step was to restore a margin of public trust and confidence in the state

In terms of overall human development, Figure 1 shows the important gains made as a result of the improved governance. These included reforms and interventions, particularly in education and health. During the five years of GNU rule, the Zimbabwean economy recovered from negative growth of 17% to a positive growth rate of 10% (Figure 3).¹⁷ During the same period inflation dropped from 89.7 sextillion % to 6%.¹⁸ Revenue inflow into the formal economy increased and so did assistance from the international donor agencies and other multilateral institutions.

The GNU working arrangement was not perfect and was frequently mired by infighting over the control of state resources. However, this does not detract from the fact that the quality of governance briefly improved (Figure 2) and sound decisions were made as compared with the period before and after GNU. Key to its success was the establishment of checks and

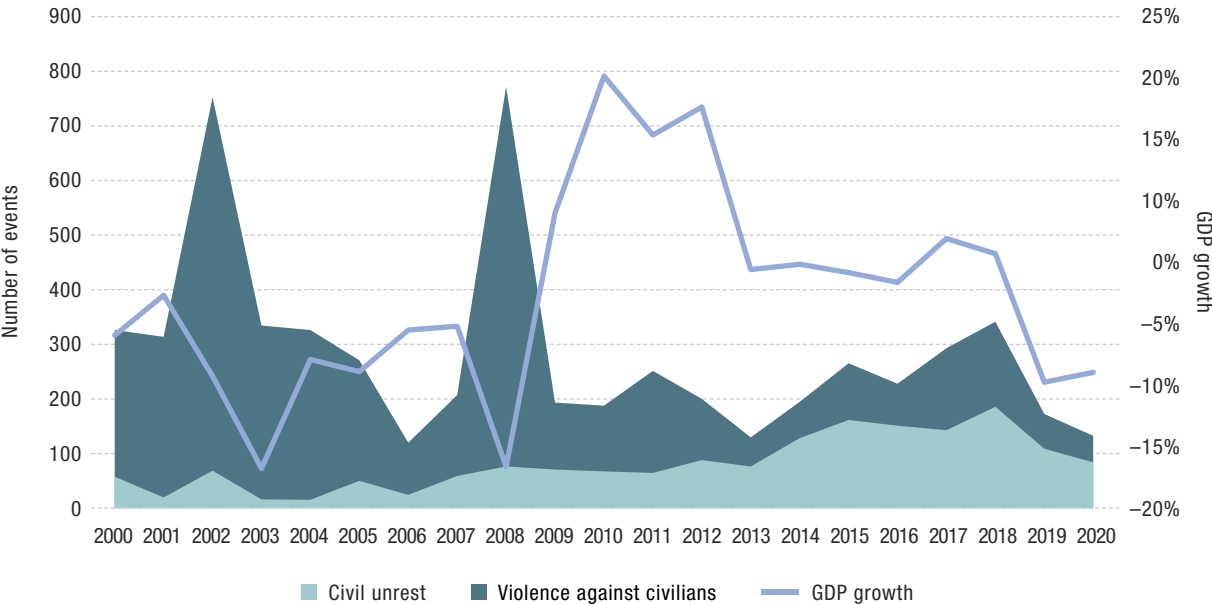
SECTION ONE

balances on the exercise of power. Greater political competition allowed for improved transparency and ultimately more assertive and independent oversight. More importantly, the GNU was driven by a solution-seeking orientation, not only in the area of the economy but also with respect to social cohesion.¹⁹ This was evident in a decline in the incidence of public violence as a result of the efforts of bodies such as the Organ for National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration (ONHRI) and the Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee (JOMIC).²⁰ It thus came as no surprise when the 2013 elections were more peaceful than those in 2008, 2005 and 2002.²¹ The GNU period arguably gave credence to the inextricable link between political stability and economic development vis-à-vis the state’s capacity to advance the human development agenda (see Figure 1).

Figure 3 shows the crucial impact that good governance has had on the relationship between economic growth and social cohesion. The left axis tracks the number of violent events, including civil unrest and violence against civilians.²² The right axis tracks the annual percentage change in GDP growth. Under the GNU, GDP growth peaked at 20% in 2010, while the number of violent events during this period declined. Since 2014, however, growth has slowed, and Zimbabwe has experienced an uptick in civil unrest.²³ In confidential interviews for this research paper with stakeholders and experts rich, a clear consensus emerged on the positive impact the GNU had on human development and national unity, which ultimately improved levels of social cohesion.²⁴

Improved governance led to better economic decisions, improved public trust and better revenue inflows (Figure 4). These inflows in

FIGURE 3: GDP growth and social cohesion



Source: ACLED & World Economic Outlook

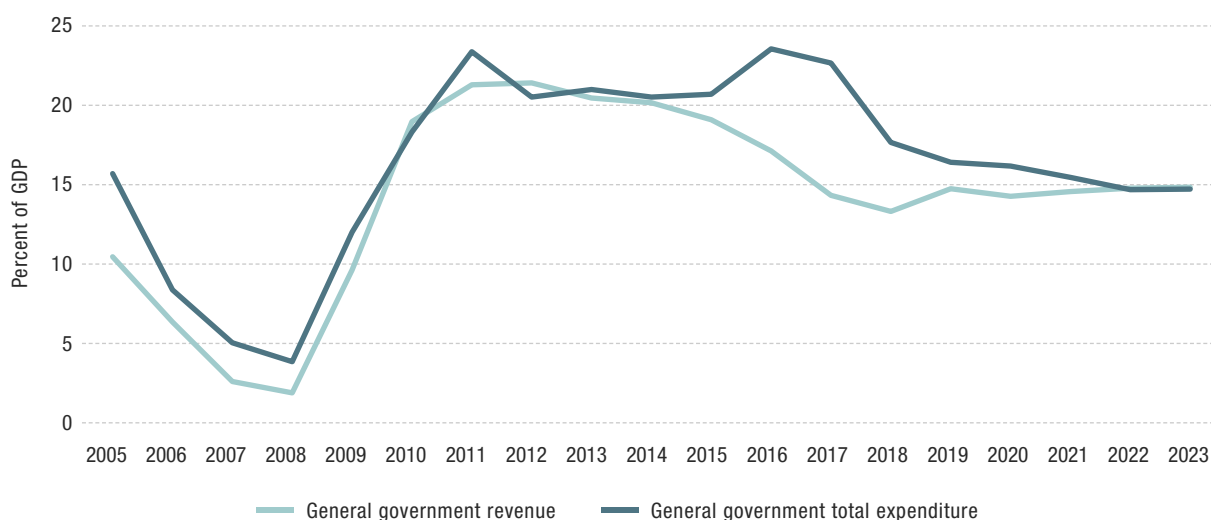
turn enabled high government spending, which was directed towards reversing the damage incurred before 2009. Figure 4 reflects this steep increase in both revenue and spending that coincided with substantive increases in human development (Figure 1).

The GNU's five-year term ended in 2013 after the adoption of a new Constitution, which was unanimously voted for by citizens and also considered by experts to be one of the best that the country had had to date. At the time it was contended that the country had better human development prospects under this new Constitution. Among other provisions, it established five independent commissions supporting democracy.²⁵ In spite of its achievements, the GNU failed in the critical areas of electoral reform to guarantee free, fair and credible elections. This then also explains why the 2013 elections, despite being relatively more peaceful, saw the ZANU-PF election victory dampened by serious rigging allegations.²⁶

Governance today

The end of the GNU coincided with declining growth (Figure 3). The implications of the economic slowdown affected government revenue inflows (Figure 4) against the backdrop of the strengthening of the now dominant currency, the US dollar. As such, price points rose, making for an unattractive foreign direct investment climate. Exports also became expensive compared to regional competitors. The country began to face serious liquidity problems, resulting in banks limiting daily withdrawals. Industrial production was under severe strain, with companies increasingly struggling to import key raw materials.²⁷ Consequently, many businesses closed. With reduced revenue, the government's capacity to address critical human development needs diminished substantially (Figure 1). As a result, gains from the GNU era came under strain as the government struggled to meet its key obligations in the provision of public goods.²⁸

FIGURE 4: Government spending and revenue



Source: *World Economic Outlook*

While the pre-GNU era was characterised by hyperinflation and a shortage of goods, the first three years after GNU were characterised by cash shortages but with the availability of goods in shops. Poverty levels increased yet again, and the government struggled to meet its public wage bill, which now consumed more than 90% of government revenue.²⁹ This meant that government was now solely an employer and could no longer do anything else to promote human development. To meet its high salary obligations, the government had to start printing money to pay workers and as a result the menace of inflation once again re-emerged.³⁰ The value of the pseudo bond currency declined sharply on the parallel market and prices of basic commodities again began rising exponentially. The economy became highly informalised, with families surviving on informal trade and thousands of young men mining gold illegally to earn a living.³¹ More money was circulating in the informal sector because citizens had no trust in the formal economy.

The end of GNU also changed the governance dynamics to the detriment of the country. From 2013 onwards, the governance dissonance within ZANU-PF had an impact on the economic situation in the country. Between 2014 and 2017, ZANU-PF was factionalised because of succession politics relating to the then ailing president Robert Mugabe. Factionalism within the cabinet and the government bureaucracy paralysed the state's ability to respond timeously and decisively to arrest the growing economic problems.³² This had detrimental effects on both human development and social cohesion. It is under these fragile

circumstances that a military coup ended Mugabe's long rule in November 2017.³³ Those behind the coup preferred to call it a military-assisted transition, but in essence, the transition had little to do with economic development and more with the long-standing succession issue in ZANU-PF.³⁴

The World Governance Indicators show that political stability and government effectiveness have been on a downward trend since 2015

Mugabe's demise generated much hope and goodwill both internally and externally. It also ushered in what was expected to be a new era in contrast to the First Republic under Mugabe.³⁵ The Second Republic under President Emmerson Mnangagwa promised sweeping reforms that had the potential to address key development issues like employment, inequalities, the trust deficit and poverty.³⁶ However, after four years under his administration, the country remains politically and economically fragile. Heavy-handed state crackdowns on political opponents, demonstrators, civil society activists, journalists and trade union leaders signify a shrinking civil space.³⁷ The World Governance Indicators (Figure 2) show that political stability and government effectiveness have been on a downward trend since 2015. Under this state of fragility, the potential for human development hangs in the balance.

Using the latest Afrobarometer data collected in 2021, public perceptions of how the government is handling society's

developmental needs paint a grim picture (Figure 5).³⁸ Nine out of ten (91%) Zimbabweans feel that the government is performing poorly with job creation, while three in four people believe the government is doing badly at addressing youth needs (77%) and improving the living standards of the poor (75%).³⁹ Public perception is slightly more positive on improvements in basic health services, with one in three people (32%) indicating that the government is handling this well.⁴⁰ This comes during the Covid-19 pandemic which has seen government ramping up its vaccination programme.⁴¹

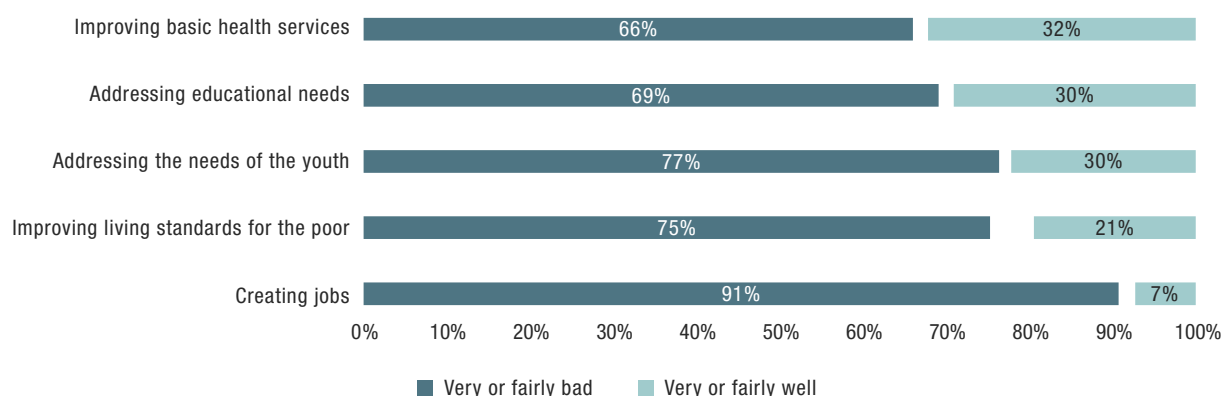
The ‘austerity for prosperity’ measures and the currency reforms which saw the reintroduction of the Zimbabwe dollar, initiated under the Transitional Stabilisation Programme (TSP), has left more people in abject poverty.⁴² Extreme poverty has risen sharply from 30% in 2017, to 42% in 2018 and 49% in 2020.⁴³ The economy

has suffered further shocks from incessant droughts and cyclones connected to climate change. In 2020, partly owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, the economy contracted by 8.1% (Figure 3).⁴⁴ Yet, the government has failed to lay any foundations for meaningful inclusive development to enable society to endure shocks. It is this failure that continues to threaten peace and social cohesion.

As Zimbabwe battles a brutal pandemic, climate change and governance challenges, a scenario could well arise where citizens contend that *kusiri kufa ndekupi?*⁴⁵ (We have lost everything already and we have nothing more to lose).

Inevitably, the material deprivation associated with this trend towards growing poverty has had wider implications for social cohesion, but to understand these implications, it is necessary to first take stock of the exact parameters of the deprivation.

FIGURE 5: Perceptions of how well the government is progressing development



Source: Afrobarometer, 2021

SECTION TWO

2

Material conditions

INEQUALITY AND POVERTY

Deepening inequalities and poverty cannot be divorced from the attendant material deprivation facing the general population. According to Burton, ‘human needs can be both physical and non-physical and they are key to the physical survival and general well-being of citizens’.⁴⁶ Azar also argues that ‘the most obvious ontological need is individual physical survival and well-being.’⁴⁷ Individual or communal survival is contingent upon the satisfaction of basic needs, [and thus] grievances resulting from need deprivation are usually expressed collectively.⁴⁸ Authorities’ failure to address these grievances provides fertile ground for protracted social conflict.⁴⁹ This was evident in Figure 3, where peak collective action coincided with a decline in growth.

According to the World Bank, 7.9 million people (of a 15 million population) could be categorised as extremely poor in 2020, living on less than US\$1.90 per day.⁵⁰ This reflects a steep upward trend in poverty levels, having increased from 3 million in 2011, to 4.5 million by 2015.⁵¹ In conjunction, the share of the working poor (the share of employed people living on less than

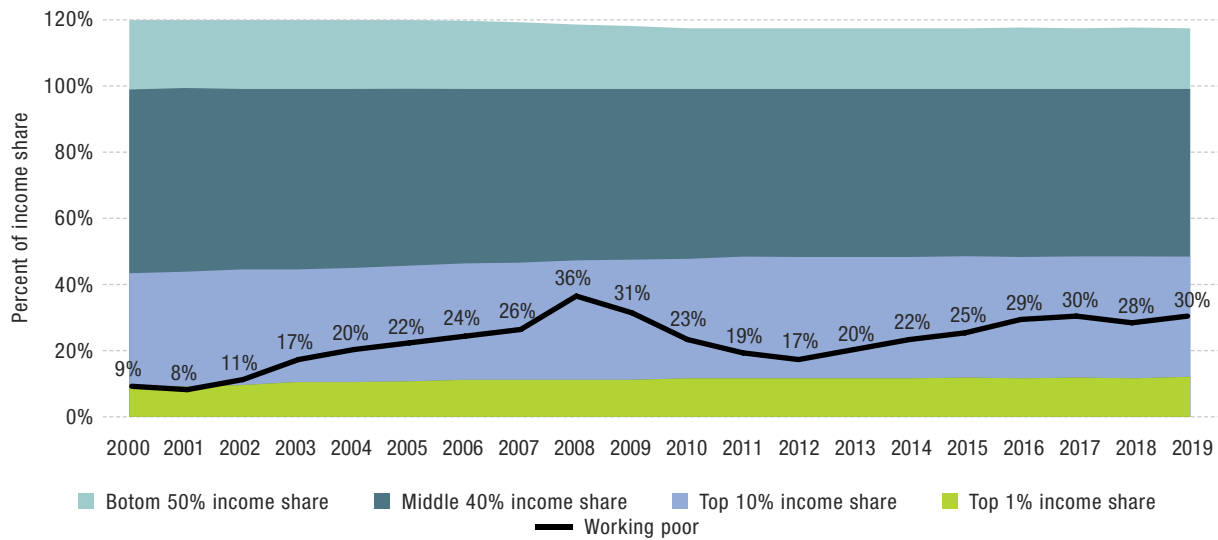
US\$1.90 per day) increased by 11% between 2011 and 2019.⁵² Figure 6 shows this trend alongside Zimbabwe’s persistent income inequality. In 2019, the country’s bottom 50% of income earners captured 13% of income in the national economy, while the top 10% of earners captured about half (51%).⁵³ This has remained so for the last decade. Further exemplifying the extreme inequality, in 2020 consumption expenditure for the poorest 10% of the population declined by 25%, while consumption for the richest 10% increased by 17%.⁵⁴

Authorities’ failure to address these grievances provides fertile ground for protracted social conflict

In Zimbabwe, major gaps in meeting the basic needs of society are prevalent across food security, access to health, quality education, clean water and gainful employment (Figure 7). The government and donor aid are unable to supply the basic needs of society.

SECTION TWO

FIGURE 6: Income inequality and the working poor

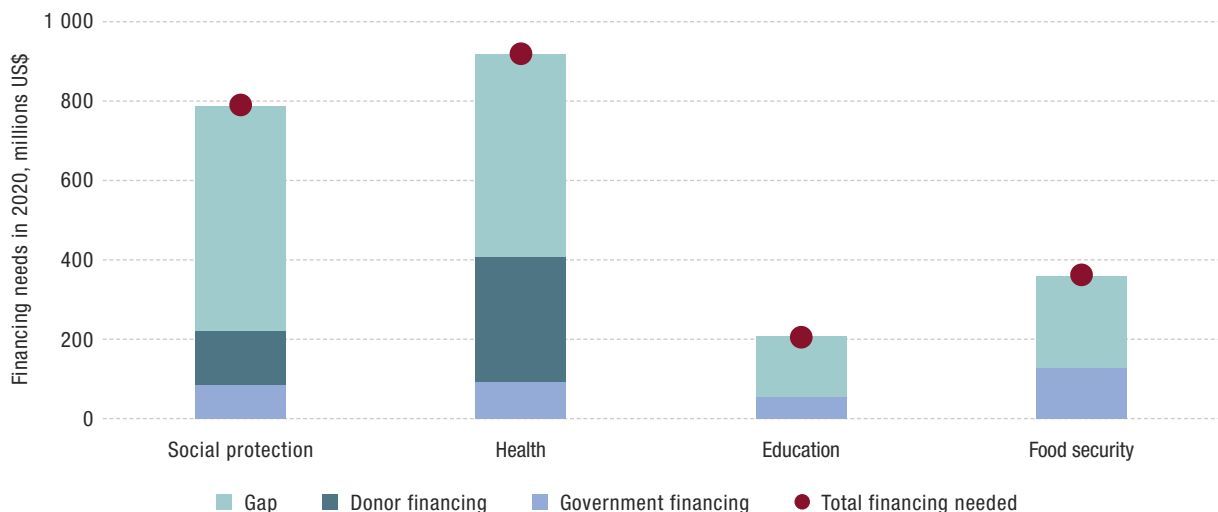


Sources: World Inequality Database; ILO Stat Explorer

Food insecurity has also been a perennial problem as reduced agricultural productivity has impacted families across the country. In 2019, more than 8 million people faced acute food insecurity and survived at the

hand of humanitarian assistance, which came mainly through the World Food Programme (WFP) and its partners.⁵⁵ Between May 2019 and June 2020, the number of severely food-insecure

FIGURE 7: Unmet basic needs of Zimbabwe's society



Source: World Bank

households almost doubled from 42% to 72%.⁵⁶ In the 2021 Afrobarometer survey, half (51%) of Zimbabweans indicated that they ‘always’, ‘many times’ or ‘several times’ have gone without food to eat.⁵⁷ Although the 2020/2021 farming season enjoyed increased rainfall and thus yielded more crops, climate change threatens to further destabilise Zimbabwe so long as the country continues to rely on rain-fed agriculture.⁵⁸ According to the World Bank, ‘reliance on rain-fed agriculture, weak property rights, lack of access to finance, [and] ineffective public spending on agriculture increased Zimbabwe’s vulnerability [to] climate shocks’.⁵⁹

Material deprivation has wider implications for social cohesion and has generated disillusionment and a feeling of abandonment on the part of citizens. There is growing latent acrimony between the state and citizens. People have lost confidence in state authorities and institutions in general. Figure 5 shows that 75% of Zimbabweans say the government is not improving the living standards of the poor.⁶⁰ The 2021 Afrobarometer survey provides additional insights, finding that eight in ten (79%) Zimbabwean’s trust non-governmental organisations (NGOs) more than the government.⁶¹ This is likely because NGOs have more often served the needs of society through various humanitarian interventions. They often fill the gap left by the government’s inability to provide public goods (see Figure 7). In addition, Afrobarometer finds that 78% of Zimbabweans trust their religious leaders more than the government,⁶² likely because spiritual support from religious leaders gives people hope during desperate times. Under

these circumstances, it is not surprising that the 2021 Afrobarometer survey also found that 67% of Zimbabweans feel that the government is steering the economy in the wrong direction. This represents the breaking down of the social contract that forms the basis of the relationship between state and society. A vertical trust deficit makes it difficult for the government to mobilise and marshal citizens for national development and creates a negative peace environment.

The tough economic situation has created a desperate competition for survival

There are also indications that scarcity is eroding horizontal trust. The tough economic situation has created a desperate competition for survival. Domestic and community violence, as well as petty crimes and corruption, have been on the increase, as described by Tsitsi Dangarembga:

*We are living on the very edge of survival...everybody looks at the other person [as] a person from whom something can be gained, something that is necessary for just continuing and getting through the day. We no longer view each other as co-nationals, as a people who have a common history and should be constructing a common fate. It is about what can I get out of this situation and this person in this situation at this moment in time.*⁶³

Human development

Disparities in human development opportunities set nations on trajectories that continuously widen social inequalities. The advancement of basic human capabilities empowers societies to live dignified lives, without having to resort to extra-legal means to survive. In light of this, it can be said that the impetus for human development needs to be an inherent characteristic of the governance ethic of the state. If not, it becomes beholden to the shifts in power by those that control it.

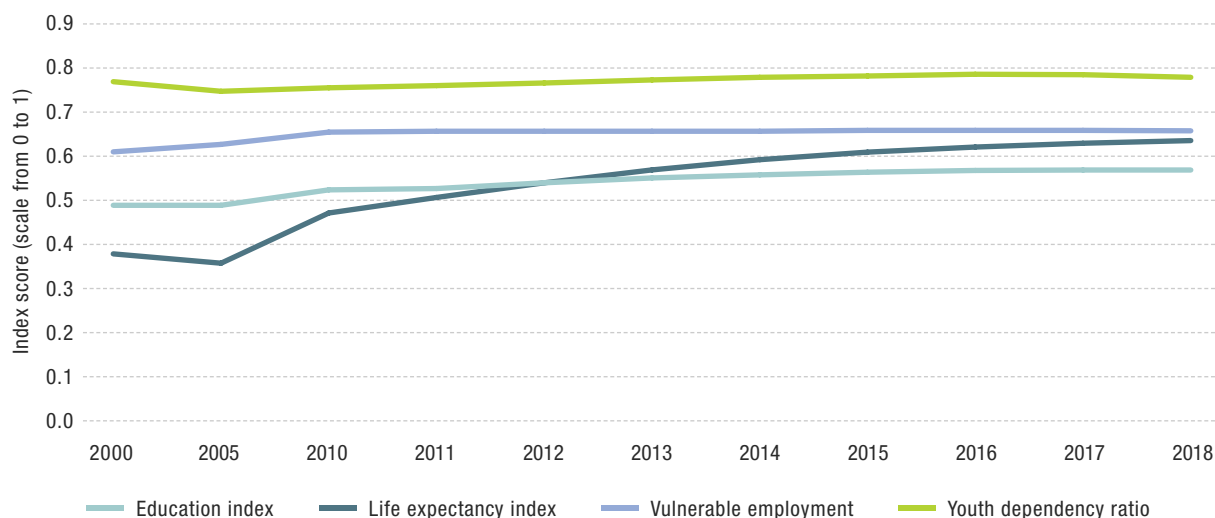
In Zimbabwe, it appears that for much of this century the latter has been true. The quality of governance ebbed and flowed together with the power of political principles (see Figure 1). This is exemplified by examples in the fields of healthcare, education and employment, and a spiralling unemployment crisis that disproportionately affects young people.

Health

Zimbabwe has seen no meaningful investment in healthcare for decades. The country's healthcare system is fragile and characterised by dilapidated infrastructure, lack of equipment and essential drugs, understaffing and low staff morale. As a result, the sector is hampered by perennial strikes and a brain drain.⁶⁴ The acute staff shortage in the medical and health sector was reflected in the 2018 national skills audit report, which indicated a deficit of 95% (Table 1).⁶⁵ A combination of these factors has resulted in Zimbabwe's poor majority being unable to afford the medical fees charged by public, private and mission hospitals.

The current services being offered in public hospitals are largely dependent on donor funding, with foreign spending on public healthcare eclipsing that of the government.⁶⁶ In 2020, donors

FIGURE 8: Zimbabwe's progress towards human development



Source: Human Development Data, UNDP

financed healthcare to the value of 2.2% of GDP, while the corresponding figure for government contributions amounted to 0.7%.⁶⁷ This model is unsustainable, as donor governments are increasingly likely to turn their attention to their own public healthcare systems amid the global pandemic.

The situation is further exacerbated by the proliferation of public health risks which have their origin in poor governance. In recent years, access to clean water and proper sanitation has also exacerbated the dire health situation. This has been particularly serious in urban areas like Bulawayo, Harare and other small towns. The expansion of human settlements without commensurate investment and expansion in the existing infrastructure, like water and sewer treatment plants, pipes and supply water bodies, have left millions of urbanites without clean water and decent sanitation facilities. In Harare, for example, most of the pipes were installed more than 60 years ago and a lot of treated water is lost through leakages.⁶⁸ Harare and its surrounding satellite towns require 1 200 megalitres of water per day for the 4.5 million residents.⁶⁹ The city is only able to produce 450 megalitres per day and half of that is lost through leakages.⁷⁰ The 2021 Afrobarometer data finds that half (51%) of Zimbabweans say that in the last year, they have not had enough water 'many times', 'several times' or 'always', while two-thirds (66%) of people in Harare say the same.⁷¹

The problem also goes beyond the availability of water, as the quality of the water, either treated or untreated, has

been compromised by pollution and inadequate water treatment chemicals. This has seen the urban population vulnerable to water-borne diseases like cholera, typhoid and dysentery.

The challenge of accessing water for domestic use also has a gendered dimension and has increased the burden on women and girls, who typically bear the responsibility of spending hours at communal boreholes, the main source of water in towns.⁷² The situation has also created acrimony between residents and local authorities. Residents sometimes refuse to settle water bills timeously, apparently in protest against poor service, which exacerbates the budgetary constraints experienced by the struggling fiscus.

The resilience of Zimbabwean society is crumbling under the relentless pressure of material deprivation

Out of growing desperation, many have resorted to negative coping mechanisms, such as substance abuse.⁷³ A notable increase in the use of drugs like crystal methamphetamine, for example, has been recorded.⁷⁴ Such developments clearly point to the extent to which the resilience of Zimbabwean society is crumbling under the relentless pressure of material deprivation without any reprieve from government. After several decades, the very fabric of society is at risk.

Education

For years, Zimbabwe's education system was singled out as an African success story. In recent years this record has been tarnished by underfunding and the resultant decline in the quality of education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Education spending as a percentage of GDP decreased from 5.2% in 2014 to 1.3% in 2019, and by 2020 this figure stood at 1%.⁷⁵ Additionally, between 2017 and 2020, the amount of school revenue being ploughed back into the education system dropped by 3.3% of GDP (from 3.6% to 0.3%).⁷⁶ The impact of this is illustrated in Figure 8, which shows that the education index has stagnated since 2012.⁷⁷ The impact has been devastating for the country's future. Poor teacher remuneration, low motivation and a shortage of textbooks have resulted in a decline in pass rates at grade seven, and at Ordinary and Advanced Levels. According to the World Bank, 'only 15% of students have textbooks, 1.2 million primary and secondary students lack access to writing places'.⁷⁸

But the education challenge in Zimbabwe is not only about a lack of physical resources. Human resource challenges are also central to the dismal state of education. A loss of purchasing power, coupled with the impact of Covid-19, has forced teachers to attend classes for just two days a week, with rural schools being affected the most adversely. As Covid-19 lockdowns made remote learning a necessity, many students without access to the internet (or even electricity) have missed out on education. Most teachers, moreover, have limited access to data and the necessary equipment for digital learning.⁷⁹

These factors jointly resulted in an increase in the number of dropouts and the number of schools that registered 0% pass rates at grade seven in the 2020 national examinations.⁸⁰ This means that the country faces the future risk of a disempowered generation that will be unable to contribute meaningfully to national development. This misalignment has the effect of stunting national development because it means the

TABLE 1: Skills deficit (or surplus) by sector

Sector	Availability (%)	Surplus/deficit (%)
Engineering and technology	6.43	-94
Natural and applied science	3.09	-97
Business and commerce	121	21
Agriculture	12	-88
Medical and health sciences	5	-95
Applied arts and humanities	82	-18
Average	38.25	-61.75

Source: National Skills Audit Report

country is producing redundant graduates, forcing many to join the informal sector as vendors. Creating the skills needed to advance the country creates momentum for inclusive development, and it is essential that policymakers ensure that the education system is supporting young people in acquiring the skills that will be beneficial to both their own advancement as well as the country's overall development.

According to the recently conducted national skills audit, the country is facing a national skills deficit of 61.75% (Table 1).⁸¹ In the absence of the agency that education affords people in shaping their own destinies, the barriers towards entry into illicit informal economies are being lowered. As will be discussed later, entry into illicit economic activity, resulting from necessity, is a fast-growing trend in Zimbabwe.

Employment

Mass unemployment and vulnerable employment are contributing to perennial economic insecurity in Zimbabwe. The Afrobarometer results show that nine in ten people feel that the government is doing either 'very badly' or 'fairly badly' in job creation (Figure 5).⁸² The current official unemployment rate is 16.4%, but this definition includes those earning a living in the rapidly expanding informal sector.⁸³ Due to political and macro-economic trends, de-industrialisation has led to millions of job losses, forcing people into the informal sector or to emigrate to other countries. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Zimbabwe has the second-largest informal economy in the world.⁸⁴ According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), more

than 67% of economic activities are taking place in the informal sector.⁸⁵ Figure 8 shows that the number of people in vulnerable employment remained consistent across the last decade.⁸⁶

The education system must support young people in acquiring the skills beneficial to both their own advancement as well as the country's overall development

In recent years, the closing of many formal enterprises has pushed more than 60% of the working population into the shadow economy, with the consequence that more than 10 million people are estimated to be earning a living through vending.⁸⁷ While the informal sector has played a pivotal role in enabling millions to earn a living, the danger lies in the sector's inherently fragile nature, which exposes workers to the inevitable shocks that are experienced by the formal economy. Informal workers are equally if not more affected by these shocks, but remain without a safety net. The Covid-19-induced global recession and the extended lockdowns have exposed this reality but also exacerbated the fragility of the informal sector. Without any meaningful social safety nets or social protection strategy, those relying on the informal sector or who have vulnerable employment in the formal economy, have found themselves facing abject poverty.

In 2021, this vulnerability showed itself across the entire Zimbabwean society. Figure 9 presents Afrobarometer findings

pertaining to respondents that have indicated that they go without a cash income either 'always', 'many times' or 'several times' in the course of a year. In most cases, at least eight out of ten people experience income deprivation.⁸⁸ Those in rural areas, as well as women, were most likely to go without an income compared to their male and/or urban counterparts. This illustrates the depth and breadth of Zimbabwe's employment crisis, while also revealing further the growing material deprivation after global, continental and regional economies shrank in 2020.

Youth

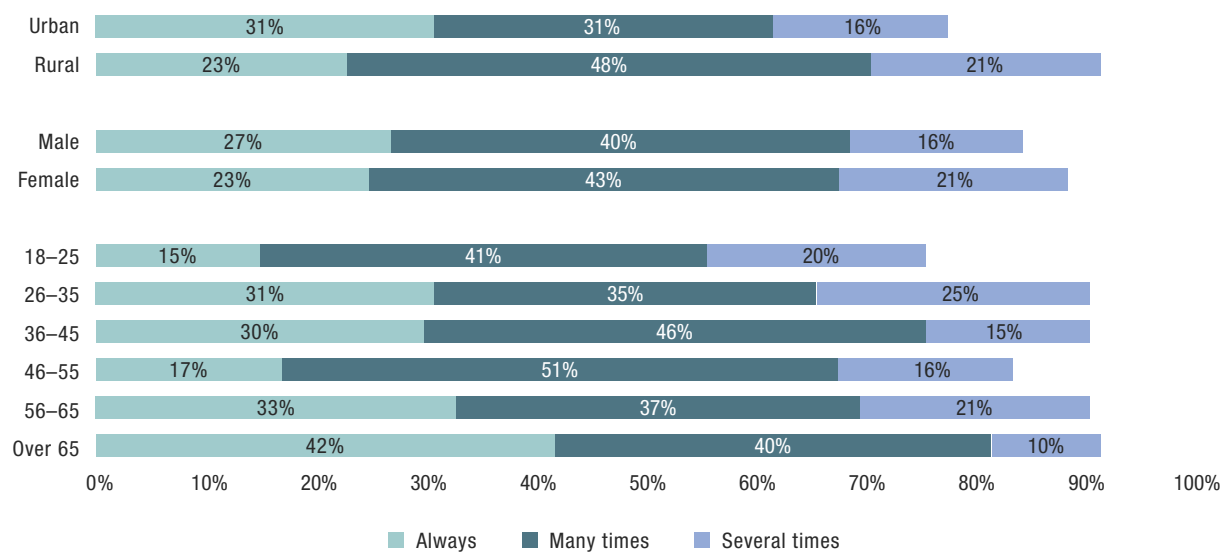
Presently, more than 60% of Zimbabwe's population is below the age of 35 and most have no access to decent education or employment.⁸⁹ Like other measures shown in Figure 8, the youth dependency ratio has grown substantially over the past decade.

The desperation caused by these precarious circumstances makes people vulnerable to abuse by populist political sentiments. In the absence of material security and any future

prospect of achieving it within the formal economy and within the parameters of the rule of law, we cannot exclude the possibility of growing numbers engaging in alternative, more forceful means of political engagement, and illicit economic activity, resulting from necessity. This is already happening. Young men are increasingly joining gangs involved in illegal mining of minerals such as gold. Popularly known as *Amakorokoza* or *Makorokoza* (illegal gold miners), they have become a common feature in almost every province in the country. The use of violence in 'gold wars' by rival gangs using machetes and guns is now common in gold-rich areas like Kwekwe, Kadoma, Chakari, Shamva, Gwanda, Mazowe and Bindura.

The Zimbabwean youth are in a situation that was described by Vigh as social death.⁹⁰ This concept emerges 'due to the absence of a possibility of a worthy life due to seemingly unending economic crises'.⁹¹ Thus, death ceases to be just physical but can also become social because being a youth can become 'a social moratorium for people unable to transition to normal adulthood'.⁹²

FIGURE 9: Who goes without an income and how often?



Source: Afrobarometer, 2021

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A large, stylized white number '3' is centered on a solid olive-green rectangular background. The number is composed of thick, rounded strokes, with the top and bottom curves being particularly prominent.

Competition and instability –
The consequences of
economic marginalisation

Artisanal small-scale gold mining creates instability

Case studies of Kwekwe and Mazowe

The growth and expansion of artisanal small-scale gold mining (ASGM) can be connected to the economic decline, rising unemployment and poverty in Zimbabwe.⁹³ Although artisanal mining was decriminalised in 2014, it has given rise to harmful practices including illegal mining, while its unregulated nature facilitates smuggling of metals and minerals. After the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme from 2000, smallholder farming and small-scale mining became major sources of livelihood for many. However, climate change and other systemic factors have rendered agriculture unreliable, forcing thousands to venture into ASGM.

ASGM not only provides a much-needed means to earn a living, but the US dollars from the lucrative sector are a good source for capital accumulation. ASGM has attracted a lot of other players in addition to desperate youth, such as political elites, illegal gold buyers, unscrupulous middlemen and criminals. Serious violence in artisanal mining

was first witnessed in alluvial diamond mining in the Chiadzwa area in Manicaland Province during the most difficult economic phase in the country from 2005 to 2008.⁹⁴ However, there has been a recent upsurge in violence in gold-rich areas by machete-wielding gangs, popularly known as *Mashurugwi*.⁹⁵

It is estimated that gold worth US\$1.5 billion is smuggled annually out of the country

Much of the gold produced by artisanal small-scale gold miners (ASGMers) is being smuggled out of the country. There is therefore no fiscal benefit to the country, which is also being deprived of its natural heritage as mining has caused massive environmental damage on huge tracts of land. Although these operations have increased annual gold production, much of the gold is being externalised because of the failure by Fidelity Printers and Refineries to offer competitive prices.⁹⁶ Fidelity Printers and Refineries is a subsidiary of the Reserve

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FIGURE 10: Illegal artisanal miners look for gold in Mazowe district, about 40 km north of Harare, Zimbabwe, 26 November 2020



Source: Columbus Mavhunga/VOA

Bank of Zimbabwe and is the official sole buyer of gold in Zimbabwe. However, due to uncompetitive prices, several illegal buyers have emerged, taking advantage of ASGMers. In 2020, ASGMers produced 9.35 tonnes of gold compared to 17.48 tonnes in 2019.⁹⁷ The country witnessed its national gold production decline to 31% in 2020.⁹⁸ In reality, however, more gold is being produced but it is leaving the country through porous borders.⁹⁹

The smuggling of gold is illustrated in the high-profile case of the chairperson of the

Zimbabwe Miners Federation, Henrietta Rushwaya. Closely connected to the ruling party, Rushwaya was arrested in October 2021 at Robert Mugabe International Airport with half a gold bar (about 6kgs of pure gold) en route to Dubai.¹⁰⁰ The case has since gone cold. Smuggling deprives the government of much-needed revenue and foreign exchange, yet the government earmarked gold production as a key sector in contributing towards its Vision 2030. It is estimated that gold worth US\$1.5 billion is smuggled annually out of the country.¹⁰¹

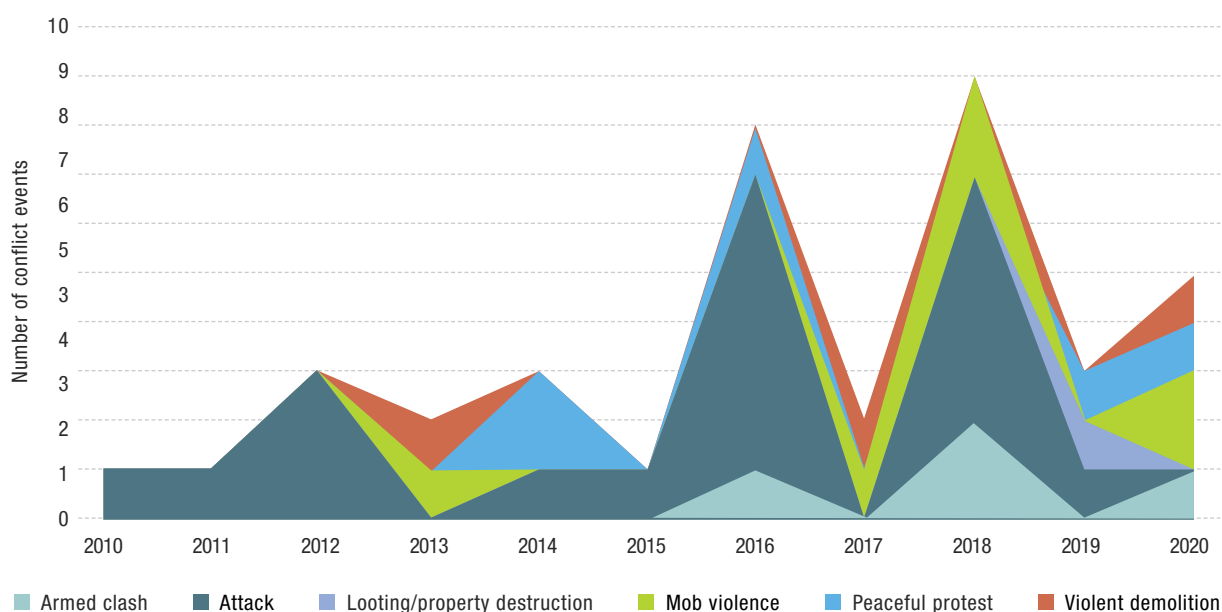
Kwekwe district

Kwekwe district is located in the Midlands Province in the central part of Zimbabwe, 200 kilometres from the capital Harare. The town was originally established in 1898 as a gold-mining town, and it expanded during the colonial period with the establishment of the Zimbabwe Iron and Steel Company (ZISCO), formerly the Rhodesian Iron and Steel Company. ZISCO and several gold mines around the district became the area's biggest employers. However, these main providers of livelihoods were not spared by the successive economic shocks. At first, they were forced to scale down their operations during the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in the mid-1990s before eventually closing and rendering thousands of people jobless.¹⁰²

The desperate and unemployed former mine workers, alongside newly unemployed from other sectors, started illegal small-scale gold mining (Chikorokoza) in areas like Venice, Empress, Gaika, Globe and Phoenix mines to earn a living. The ASGM in Kwekwe became the only lucrative option for the unemployed because of attractive gold prices offered by illegal gold buyers. The district is now infamously known as the Chikorokoza capital of the country.¹⁰³

The growing number of ASGMers and the informal nature of the sector have contributed to ongoing chaotic mining operations and rising instability.¹⁰⁴ According to Mawowa, 'so extensive and unordered has been artisanal mining in Kwekwe that trenches have been dug through national roads, railway lines and both public and private premises'.¹⁰⁵ Mawowa estimates the number of ASGMers

FIGURE 11: Conflict events in Kwekwe



Source: ACLED

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in Kwekwe to be more than 1 million, although the informal nature of operations makes it hard to quantify.¹⁰⁶ So lucrative has the sector been that unemployed university graduates have abandoned their job searches to join the sector.

ASGMers in Kwekwe have created a very vibrant sub-economy that now sustains livelihoods for millions of people.¹⁰⁷ Digging for gold is synonymous with digging for sought-after US dollar earnings. The increase in the number of people flocking to the area has also increased the demographic diversity, and tensions underpinned by the differing interests of those involved in the sector continue to simmer. Women are also migrating to the area to sell goods and services to ASGMers, ranging from food and clothes to transactional sex.¹⁰⁸ Also involved are politicians, illegal gold buyers, middlemen, runners and criminal syndicates. The involvement of criminal syndicates has led to an increase in violence and murders in the Kwekwe area. Mkodzongi argues that violent conflict among different players is largely attributed to the need to control resource-rich areas.¹⁰⁹

Economic inequity could help explain the phenomenon of machete-wielding gangs, *Mashurugwi*, who are largely marginalised youths who have resorted to violence and theft in mining areas.¹¹⁰ Mkodzongi argues that 'the violence must be conceptualised within the difficult macro-economic context, which has forced many unemployed people (especially the youths) to pursue mining-based livelihoods and hence the increased competition over scarce mineral resources'.¹¹¹ Figure 11 shows that this environment has led to a gradual increase in conflict events over the last 10 years.

Prominent gangs in Kwekwe include a group locally known as *Al Shabaab*.¹¹² They have strong connections to some senior ruling party officials from the province. Other criminal gangs include the groups *Mbimbos*, *Magombiro* and *Mabhudhi*, who mostly specialise in raiding gold ore or demanding rents from ASGMers using machetes and guns. ASGMers have responded by forming defence syndicates to protect themselves from attacks by criminal gangs by also arming themselves with machetes and guns.¹¹³

Mazowe district

Mazowe district is located 40 kilometres from Harare in the Mashonaland Central Province. The gold-rich district is home to some of the country's oldest mines, including the Mazowe mines (since 1890), as well as several other mines, of which the Jumbo mine is the most prominent because of its rich ore. Artisanal mining activities in the area have been concentrated mainly along the Mazowe River in old disused mines. However, with improvements in gold extraction technology and decriminalisation of artisanal mining in 2014, the previously abandoned mines have become new hunting territory for artisanal miners.

Mazowe became one of the epicentres for machete gang violence in 2018 following the cessation of operations in 2016 by the Metallon Corporation, which had the biggest mine in the district and employed hundreds of workers.¹¹⁴ The end of operations forced thousands of workers and their dependants into unemployment and poverty.¹¹⁵ Similar to events in Kwekwe, the former employees were the first artisanal miners to invade the mine, taking advantage of their knowledge of the

mine. Even though the mine was supposedly protected by police and hired private guards under the provisions of care and maintenance, the police in cahoots with private guards started collecting rents from the illegal miners upon entering and exiting the main shaft.¹¹⁶

The news of the high-grade ore findings from Mazowe created inflows of artisanal miners from all over the country as well as unemployed and desperate fortune seekers from Harare and other towns. Part of the inflow included criminals, who were equally attracted by the prospect of prosperity. These inflows of diverse groups marked the beginning of the ongoing violence. Figure 12 shows the actors involved in events of conflict recorded by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) Project.¹¹⁷

Gangs armed with machetes and guns, with the tacit approval from police and private guards, have established checkpoints at key mining points such as shaft tunnels, where they demand entrance and exit rents payable in either US dollars or in the form of gold ore. *Mabhuru* and *Mashurugwi* gangs specialise in looting gold ore and money from ASGMers. Other gangs enter the tunnels at different shaft levels and raid the illegal miners or force them at gunpoint to extract ore for them. Competing gangs sometimes clash for control of rich ore territory. ASGMers have resorted to arming themselves with machetes to repel attacks from gangs. As expected, this creates a chaotic and violent atmosphere. Some senior politicians have been suspected of operating in the shadows, being involved in planning and also providing protection for some of the marauding groups.¹¹⁸

According to a report by the International Crisis Group, at the peak of chaos no less than five people died per day at the mine.¹¹⁹ This figure could be conservative if one factors in those who died underground due to hazardous working conditions, including carbon monoxide poisoning (and whose bodies were never accounted for but were thrown into the flooding shaft).

Mazowe River now has more than 155 kilometres of its bank destroyed by alluvial mining

Just as in the case in Kweke, the illegal mining activities in the area resulted in large amounts of money circulating in the area. This attracted thousands of non-miners, such as women who came in as vendors of all sorts of products: food; groceries; cooked meals prepared in the surrounding bushes and mobile trailers; clothes; gold extraction chemicals like mercury; and transactional sex.¹²⁰ The violence which characterised the area was not limited to clashes among gangs or ASGMers, but also between vendors. Local traders from the surrounding areas fought to defend their turf from invading traders coming from Harare and other towns. Although the government eventually intervened to drive away illegal miners and other service providers in order to pave the way for the new owners who bought the mine from Metallon Corporation, ASGMers simply moved to other alluvial mining sites and old disused shafts, which are scattered all over the district and along the Mazowe River. The

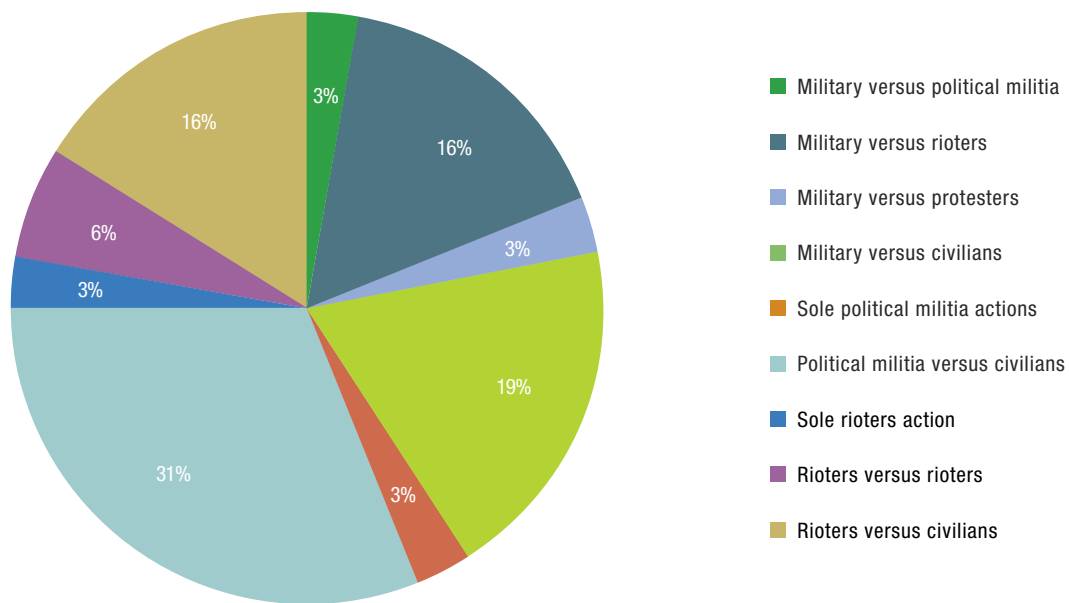
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violence and environmental destruction have not stopped; they are just no longer concentrated in one main site.

Mazowe River now has more than 155 kilometres of its bank destroyed by alluvial mining.¹²¹ Damaged areas include portions with very deep pits and heavily silted sections.

Other parts of the river have been diverted by ASGMers. These activities have affected the river's aquatic life, farmers, wildlife and livestock.¹²² The water supply and quality to towns like Bindura and Glendale are also affected. Excessive use of chemicals like mercury means the towns now require more chemicals to purify their water due to this pollution.

FIGURE 12: Actors involved in conflicts in Mazowe from 2016 to 2020



Source: ACLED

SECTION FOUR

4

Synthesised discussion
of the future of inclusive
development and
stability in Zimbabwe

This analysis has illustrated that principled and strong governance in Zimbabwe over the past two decades resulted in an enabling environment for inclusive development, with resultant benefits for peace and security. Not only did governance indicators improve (Figure 2) during the period of relatively improved governance under the GNU, but it also increased revenue (Figure 4) and facilitated progress in human development (Figure 1). Additionally, working poverty decreased (Figure 6) and trust in institutions improved, as did political stability (tracked in Figure 3 through both civic collective action and violence against civilians). This highlights the crucial role that strong coordinated governance can play in securing a more peaceful and inclusive Zimbabwean society.

Unfortunately, the important gains made under the GNU have not been sustained. As a result, Zimbabwe has taken a path of deteriorating governance, economic decline and growing instability. The impact of these developments has been a deterioration in key metrics for human development in areas such as health and education. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a further crippling effect

on these underperforming spheres. At the same time, the prospects for employment growth are limited, forcing workers into a growing informal, and frequently illicit, economy.

Prospects for employment growth are limited, forcing workers into a growing informal, and frequently illicit, economy

The constraints on growth have left youth, and society at large, with few options to secure stable income. Consequently, Zimbabweans are flocking to areas like Kwekwe and Mazowe where artisanal and illegal mining opportunities offer them a lifeline to offset their poverty. The unregulated nature of these activities has allowed extortion rackets and unsavoury politicians to exploit profits. This has resulted in a growing number of conflicts and fatalities. Not only are considerable amounts of commodities like gold leaving the country through covert channels, but

the social and environmental damage being incurred is likely to have its own ripple effects on society and thus on stability.

Without meaningful opportunities for society, and youth in particular, pockets of instability might continue to absorb those being pushed to the margins of economic inclusion. A recent skills audit illustrated the chasm of mismatch in the labour market (Table 1). In abundance is the supply of skills related to commerce and business, a factor wholly necessary to support market-driven growth. As such, policy interventions must consider how to harness these skills through stimulation of business activities, useful not only for creating income opportunities, but also for strengthening the private sector and thus creating a positive feedback loop for inclusive development. The skills audit also lays bare the shortage of medical and health science professionals (a 95% deficit), clearly necessitating

investments into education in this field, where there is a strong potential to absorb youth into work streams. This also points to the importance of budgetary considerations for the healthcare sector, so that skilled professionals in public healthcare jobs can be certain of remuneration, thus preventing further skills drain. The decreased expenditure in healthcare hurts both the quality of life of Zimbabweans and the prospects for offsetting skills deficits in the labour market, which sets off its own chain of positive developments.

If anything, scarcity lies at the heart of threats to stability, and it is crucial that the state facilitates an environment for private sector development and human development. This means that it ought to concern itself with improving governance so that its core function is service to society. Without this, scarcity will continue to threaten the social fabric of society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Government of Zimbabwe

- 1. Improve transparency and accountability mechanisms.** Efficient and predictable governance lies at the heart of the nexus between inclusive development and peace. As such, the government should prioritise outcomes-based performance management and evaluation, captured in law to ensure transparency and accountability. To ensure the effective functioning of the rule of law, prioritising the separation of powers will be essential.
- 2. Consider macroeconomic policy that can help finance social safety nets for the informal sector.** The size and extent of dependence on the informal sector by society necessitates proper consideration of macroeconomic policy that can after some time facilitate the development of social safety nets for households whose main source of income is derived from informal trade. For example, developing employment-intensive industry with a focus on niche areas in the global value chain, from which state revenues can over time be leveraged to introduce a social security net.
- 3. Targeted and informed investments in skills development are necessary to offset labour market mismatch.** This includes working with the private sector to create opportunities for the oversupply of business and commerce graduates, who can in turn stimulate growth. It also necessitates greater investment in healthcare education and healthcare systems so that skilled professionals are incentivised to work in public healthcare facilities that face skills deficits.
- 4. Partnerships to end illegal mining in a safe and sustainable manner.** Measures and incentives to contain illegal mining need to be developed in partnership with key stakeholders, such as government, Fidelity Printers and Refineries, miners and organised labour.

5. **Proper investigations into state officials who abuse their power and participate in corruption related to illegal mining.** The government must investigate and hold accountable politicians and police officers who are complicit in illegal mining operations and the resultant violence in areas like Kwekwe and Mazowe, so that appropriate strategies can be crafted to help regain control of the associated mining activities.
6. **Urgent action is needed to both improve infrastructure and prevent the degradation of water quality.** Water supply and quality is now a major concern in Harare and areas where artisanal mining affects bodies of water.

To civil society

1. **Civil society organisations can play an important role in studying and facilitating research into the unfolding illegal mining situation.** Research must play an integral role in the crafting of pragmatic policy solutions.

To the international community

1. **Hold the Zimbabwean government accountable to standards of good governance, which is also critical in the long term for regional prosperity and peace.** The Southern African Development Community (SADC) in particular, as the most immediate

regional body, should actively advance this agenda.

2. **Seek ways to empower civil society and civil society organisations to advocate for themselves.** This is especially critical at a time when the civil space is becoming increasingly restricted.
3. **Donor aid priorities must be informed by the skills audit.** Targeted training and education will advance the inclusive economic development prospects for Zimbabwe.
4. **Support research and fact finding related to the illegal mining operations.** Urgent attention and further research are required to better understand the circumstances and impacts of the ongoing and escalating illegal mining across the country.
5. **Consider targeted sanctions against the trade in illicit gold.** This, coupled with human development programmes for youth forced into the trade due to a lack of other options, can help offset the illegal trade and its impact on youth.
6. **In instances where chemicals like mercury are impacting water quality, immediate action is needed to safeguard people, aquatic life, wild animals and farm animals.** Environmentalists and affected communities must be supported to work towards sustainable solutions.

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