THE EFFECTS OF POLITICAL DECISIONS ON SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS FOCUSING ON THE INFORMAL ECONOMY. (Zimbabwe Scenario)

A new survey by Zimbabwe's National Statistical Office (Zimstat) shows a workforce (aged 15 years and above) of 7.8m people, out of a total population of 13.4m. Of this potential workforce, some 750,000 people—most of them students—are defined as economically inactive, while 800,000 are officially defined as unemployed. This gives an overall unemployment rate of 11.3%—far below the 85-90% figures widely used in the media. The explanation for the substantial gap between the two estimates of unemployment is the size of the informal sector. According to the Zimstat report, 94.5% of the 6.3m people defined as employed are working in the informal economy. (Zimstat 2014)

1) PROMOTING AND PURSUING BAD POLICIES FOR PERSONAL GAINS AT THE EXPENSE OF THE MAJORITY

- Political Parties fight for their space through exchanging empty promises at the expense of the desparate and vulnerable. All this has serious implications on the Social Security of the Informal Economy.
- Sometimes most social protection interventions for the IE buy external funding partners have been pollitised.
- Effects of ESAP - (Trade Liberalisation, Budgetary Policy & Fiscal Deficit reduction, Domestic deregulation and monetary interest rate policy, Social Dimensions of adjustment).
- Effects of AIPPA & POSA
- Effects of Government of National Unity (ZANU PF & MDC)
- Effects of Indigenisation Policy & ZIM ASSET
- Effects of Slow alignment & non-consulting alignment of policies with the new constitution of Zimbabwe.
- It is not just the size of the informal sector that is concerning but the extent and speed of its growth (Zimstat)

2) COMPROMISED DECISIONS IN RESPECT OF POLITICAL PLEASURE

- Since 2000 Zimbabwe has relied on Enhanced National Social Protection Strategy which was limited in scope as it covered only one pillar of social protection. This never covered the informal workers.
- Over the years the government invested a lot in the social sector, but results have been poor.
- The Social protection policy framework has never brought any coherence to social protection activities especially in the Informal Economy.
- There is no proper programmes co-ordination to cover the informal economy.
- The relevance and adequacy of the system is biased and only controlled through political power and force.
- This ultimately has a huge impact on the lives of vulnerable people who are mainly the Informal Economy Workers, of which the majority are women & youth.

Social protection aims to cushion communities and sections against the vagaries of poverty (UN 2009)

3) POOR SERVICE DELIVERY BY POLITICIANS

- Local Government opposes and fights the availability of enabling environment in relation to many categories of social safety nets for the sector.
- Mainly Members of Parliament, Senators & Councillors promise for the vote to change the livelihoods of the majority poor through representing them on critical issues such as Social Service Delivery, but alas when they get into office of power they even promote what infringes their constituencies.
- Legislation to serve the sector is passed without consultations of the affected.
- The operational Environment has been labled a platform influenced by partisan politics (where political mileage can be gained or lost).
- Public Institutions (Hospitals, Clinics, Schools, Public Toilets etc are being privatised.
- No sector specific pension schemes or medical aid.
- Continuous unwarranted harassments of the Informal Traders on use of public space.
- No political will in representation of the sector in good times.
- This has become the common political treatment to the informal Economy.

4) OVER PROMISING AND UNDER DELIVERING

- In its 2013 election manifesto, the ruling party, ZANU-PF, promised to create 2m new jobs by 2018. Instead, unemployment and under-employment—especially in the informal sector—will get much worse, and with it the socio-political climate will continue to deteriorate. (Zimstat 2014)
- From June 2013 to date more than 25,000 jobs have been lost Instead 2m-Asadu development plan, about 1.35m job seekers will come onto the labour market. For the target of 2.2m jobs to be met, the government would have to find work for all the currently unemployed workers (800,000) as well as the entire intake of new job seekers. Very obviously that is not going to happen. (Zimstat 2014)
- Health minister David Parirenyatwa said the country had the capacity for putting up its own health insurance scheme (National News 2015, But...food for thought)
- No realisation of positive social protection schemes investment which cover the Informal Economy due to fragmentation of social protection programmes e.g NSSA has only been targeting the Formal Workers.

5) THE EFFECTS OF POLITICS ON SOCIAL PROTECTION IN THE EI

- A lot of promises are made to the sector due to voting power in the sector, but outcomes are disastrous.
- Unwanted deaths as a result of unaffordable medication.
- Growth of Street kids & Families as a result of poverty and unemployment.
- Harassments and Criminalisations of the operational environment for the IE.
- Loss of hope & survival of the tacticians now most preferred.

Unicef country representative Reza Hassaini lamented the current scenario where social sectors were almost exclusively dependent on donor funding which he said was unsustainable and unhealty for the country’s sovereign aspirations.

"There are many beautiful policies that are simply gathering dust on bookshelves. This policy must avoid the same fate. There are too many people whose lives depend on it, there are too many people we cannot afford to let down."

Jobless, no social security, no food, no hope but not useless