

THE ZIMBABWE ECONOMIC BLUES! THOUSANDS OF RETRENCHES TURN TO STREET VENDING TO EKE OUT A LIVING

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Abstract

The mission of this study is to look at the street vending in the Harare Central business district (cbd) which has become a menace to the Harare City Council (HCC), Zimbabwe. The poor and haphazard siting of the vending points mainly along the street pavements, the uncontrolled littering in the cbd area to clog the storm water drains to cause flooding in the city centre and the loss of revenue to the cash-strapped HCC means that there is a need to control and decongest the HCC cbd area. Hence is the importance of the need to carry out this study. On how the Author carried out the study, he sidestepped the lickspittle state-owned print and electronic media such as the daily Herald and weekly Sunday Mail and on the electronic media the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) and the Zimbabwe Television (ZTV) complete the list.. The privately owned print media that the Author gunned for were the Daily News, the Newsday print media etc while the weekly print media was dominated by the Zimbabwe Independent, the Standard etc. On the electronic media the dependable Internet was always on standby to provide the required study logistics. On major findings, a new thinking has to be found to solve the menacing problem of street vending in the cbd area of the HCC.

Keywords: Public administration, economic blues, retrenchees, street vending, Zimbabwe

INTRODUCTION

About 16 kilometres northeast of the Harare cbd area lies one of the capital's poorest suburbs Hatcliffe Extension which was created in 1993 to accommodate squatters from illegal settlements in and around Harare. The sprawling suburb is adjacent to Hatcliffe high density

suburb developed in the late 1980s mostly to accommodate domestic workers of the rich then mostly white workers in the nearby plush suburbs of Borrowdale and their surroundings. But 22 years into its existence, Hatcliffe's extension continue to worsen as the Zimbabwe's economic crisis shows no sign of abating, resulting in falling standards of living. The suburb has no basic infrastructure such as roads or appropriate sewer systems but these are the least of the problems for most of the residents who often have to survive on one meal a day (Mangundhla 2015).

Twenty-two-year old Murongi lost her father through death in 2005 and her mother through mental illness, had disappeared from the shack they called home soon after her father's death. Murongi, a school dropout at the tender age of 15 to assume the onerous responsibility of heading the household made up of parentless siblings, she tried her hand at self-employment but her small vegetable business soon collapsed due to the inordinate demands on the very little she made. She then, out of desperation, tried another form of self employment – prostitution – to support her parentless family.

"I did not finish my high school as you can imagine how difficult it is for one to find a job when even University graduates have become jobless", she said (Mangundhla 2015).

Zimbabwe's economic woes saw more than 50 companies lay off at least 6960 workers in 2014 alone according to the country's Retrenchment Board. The unemployment rate stands at north of 80% and is set to increase as even government is also set to retrench in order to trim its unsustainable wage bill.

"Right now we might lose our stand because I cannot afford to feed the whole family and pay U\$80 annual renewal fees for the land. There is a non-governmental organization which has promised to assist us in building the house, and should it happen it will lift a lot of weight off my shoulders", Murongi said.

Murongi is among millions of Zimbabwean finding the going extremely tough, research suggests. According to a 2014 Finscope Consumer Survey, 44% of the country's population had to skip a meal because of lack of money for food, up from 29% in 2011. This is awesome and paints a bleak picture of rising poverty among Zimbabweans (Mangundhla 2015).

The percentage of citizens that have been unable to send children to school because of lack of fees or uniforms has also gone up from 25% in 2011 to 36% in 2014 while people who have gone without cash income and had to make a plan for daily needs also went up from 54% in 2011 to 63% at the end of 2014, according to the survey. Poverty has been induced by a shrinking economy that has seen people lose their jobs or go for months without pay as formal

employment conditions worsen. The same survey stated that 60% of Zimbabwe's 7 million of adult population aged 18 and above, earn below US\$3,50 a day. This is less than a fifth of the country's poverty datum line which stood at US\$511 early in 2014 for a family of 5. The same survey results had shown 76% of the country's adult population earn less than US\$200 per month, while 7% had no income at all (Mangundhla 2015).

Salaries and wages only account for 14% of income for the country's citizens aged 18 and above while self employment and piece-work both contribute 10% each. Farming remains the main source of income accounting for 36%. On basic amenities such as water the report shockingly shows that the country's population has access to running water, down from 35% in 2011 while access to electricity for cooking remained flat between 2011 and 2014 at 29%. Masvingo based human rights activist Peter Marimi says the extent of humiliating poverty is likely to worsen this year due to poor rains.

"There has not been enough rainfall in many areas and for some farmers the crops are a write off", said Marimi.

"When there is a bad harvest, people rely on the little surplus, if any, of what they harvested last year but that obviously won't take them very far. People should just brace for hunger".

Marimi said that the poverty situation in many provinces is worsened by lack of employment opportunities.

"There is hardly any alternative sources of income; many people depend on subsistence farming because there is no industry to talk about especially in vulnerable rural areas", he said.

In March 2015 Famine Early Warning System Network warned Zimbabwe's acute food situation will remain with production likely to be affected by the late start of the rainy season, flooding and dry spells. While the clueless ZANU PF government is as usual likely to assure Zimbabweans that no one will die of hunger despite lacking the wherewithal to feed the needy, indicators strongly suggest the poverty situation will deteriorate this year (Mangundhla 2015).

With the awesome poverty bedeviling Zimbabwe left, right and centre what remains to find out is how street vending has become a menace to the HCC. Nyavaya' first dig at the menacing problem was to tell the audience how and why the disorderly street vendors had been ordered to designated sites. Details on this coming your way in just a moment.

Vendors ordered to relocate to designated sites (Nyavaya 2015)

The Harare Town Clerk, Tendai Mahachi had, in a bid to contain the lawlessness in the Harare cbd area, ordered all vendors operating at undesignated sites in the cbd area to relocate to the designated sites by Friday 10 April 2015 or risk being banned from trading in the capital. Addressing journalists in the capital in April 2015 Mahachi had said that the decision had been endorsed by leaders of various vendors' associations.

"The chairpersons of the informal traders association and council are talking the same language and the bottom line is that there should be organized trading and order in the city", Mahachi said.

"The cbd sites can only accommodate a limited number of traders and the rest will be accommodated in the suburbs", he said, adding that the Council had 20 000 registered vendors.

"The city will continuously review provision of market places with a view to increasing the number of trading sites. We want to empower our people as well as transform our economy so we will engage stakeholders at all levels so that we consult extensively before we move our people", he added (Nyavaya 2015).

However, National Vendors' Union of Zimbabwe (NAVUZ) vice chairperson Douglas Shumbayaonda had distanced himself from Mahachi's claims saying Council never consulted them.

"Removing from the streets is tantamount to saying go home and die. Our stance remains the same. As long as the economy does not change and government is not willing to chip in and give a conclusive and beneficial resolution to the matter, our members will continue trading at sites that suite them", Shumbayaonda said.

"If they (Council) have agreed with the associations they claim to have agreed, they should make sure that the registering process is done transparently to avoid the problem of corruption, which some are engaging ", he added.

It is lamentable many Zimbabweans have turned to street vending to eke out a living as the economy continues to shrink in deflation since December 2014, leading to company closures and job losses (Nyavaya 2015).

While the HCC and Navuz are in a near fight on Harare cbd area street vending Mbanje (2015) joins the discoursing with a startling revelation that for the first time ever in Harare cbd area, street butcheries are sprouting to trigger fears of disease from uninspected meat finding its way into Harare. Mbanje (2015) is on standby to take us through his spine chilling story.

Street butcheries sprout in Harare cbd (Mbanje 2015)

According to a Zimbabwean proverb – a hungry man is an angry man. The Author's heart skipped a bit when he heard it from the horse's mouth that some enterprising but daring Harare street vendors have set up mobile butcheries on street pavements where they are selling various meat products oblivious of the dreaded health and security implications of their trade. The illegal vendors are popular around the high-congested Copacabana bus terminus in Harare where they are making brisk business from an equally undiscerning clientele suffering from humiliating poverty because of a dying country and its economy. They normally display their nefarious products after 5pm when the marauding Municipal police would have knocked off duty. The highly innovative youths normally accost potential customers and in an outpouring of pleas they try to convince that their contraband meat is cheaper and that they will save precious time instead of going into a nearby supermarket where customer queues are longer.

"Its fresh, tasty and 100% beef. It would be a suicidal mistake if you do not buy from me. For only a dollar you will get all this mince", one lad said trying his luck with a customer who had asked about the quality of the mince at his make-shift stall (Mbanje 2015).

Employing baboon and monkey tricks in preparation of the customer raid, the enterprising vendors only display about three packets of meat and the rest of the contraband is stashed away in some secret place (more often than not a filthy drainaged, just in case the municipal police pounce and confiscate the contraband. HCC health director Prosper Chonzi recently admitted that food peddlers were a growing menace and that it was difficult to deal with them.

"We have not been able to get these mobile butcheries off the streets because they are so many of them. They are everywhere", the dejected sounding Chonzi had said.

"They leave a trail of garbage on the street and this contributes to disease outbreaks which become expensive to manage for the cash-strapped HCC" (Mbanje 2015).

The abominable practice used to be confined to high density suburbs before the enterprising vendors migrated to the lucrative HCC cbd area. Health experts had warned consumers of this contraband risked contracting bacterial/fungal infections by buying contaminated street food.

"It often takes a crisis for the collective consciousness on safety to be stirred and any serious response to be taken", World Health organization Food Safety and Zoonoses director Kazuaki Muyagishima said (Mbanje 2015).

The HCC vending is not being taken lightly by the financially-hamstrung local authority. To curb the seemingly growing menace, Matenga (2015) reports that the HCC has finally decided to set

up a committee to handle the hot vending issue. He is on standby to take us through the details as below.

Harare sets up committee to handle hot vending issue (Matenga 2015)

On the hot vending issue the HCC, famous for dozing while the City is burning has finally resolved unanimously to set up a committee to deal with the paralyzing vending issue once and for all. To avoid confrontation with the street vendors the besieged HCC had finally resolved to set up a standing committee to decisively handle the emotive street vending issue to avoid a violent confrontation after the street vendors operating at undesignated sites in the cbd area had vowed to resist any forced relocation. Mayor Bernard Manyenyeni had said there was need for the local authority to strike a balance and find an amicable way of decongesting the overcrowded city without offending the vendors whom he described as *“innocent victims of a failed economy”*

“It’s a difficult balance, the challenge being how to deal with victims of a failed economy who are trying to manage a livelihood. We are setting up a new standing committee for the informal sector. It should be able to secure certain mutually beneficial positions for Harare”, Manyenyeni said. (Matenga 2015).

Harare Mayor Manyenyeni had continued:

“The size of the informal sector is now phenomenal. It has to receive attention and focus at council level commensurate to its dominance in the economy. This growth was unforeseen, but it is real and tangible”.

The Town Clerk Tendai Mahachi had earlier ordered the vendors now believed to be 50 000 to vacate the overcrowded streets and take space at designated vending sites outside the overcrowded cbd area, but the cashless vendors had stood their ground and vowed to stay put, arguing that the council’s stalls could only cater for 6 000 vendors. The majority of Zimbabweans who are now retrenchees after the companies they used to work for had closed shop to survive, had now turned to street vending or informal trading with thousands now flooding the city centre for brisk business selling airtime recharge cards, second hand clothing smuggled from Mozambique, groceries and meat products to eke out a living now tough to earn in an economy which continues hurtling towards the deep hole. Several urban centres throughout the country are facing a similar challenge as HCC (Matenga 2015).

The life of a street vendor in Zimbabwe is not all that plain sailing. The twists and turns which are too numerous to enumerate – the municipal police dogging the street vendor to confiscate his/her contraband, the weather challenges militating against the street vendor etc – all contribute to the vendor being in catch -22 situation. Ndebele (2015) is on standby to take us through some of the life threatening challenges faced by a street vendor as he/she sets out to eke a living in an adverse economic environment which is not of his/her own making.

Vendors in catch – 22 situation (Ndebele 2015)

Thirty-five year old Loveness Muchenje, one of the street vendors who have swarmed the streets of Harare's chaotic cbd area in search of means of survival struggles to maintain the balance between aggressively marketing her wares lined up along a Julius Nyerere way pavement to potential customers and keeping an eye at her three year old daughter who constantly wants to dash into the busy road. Like many other vendors – Muchenje who sells ladies shoes is under pressure to sell enough each day to make ends meet. But above all, she must always be aware of the municipal police raids in which they arrest vendors and confiscate their goods often for their own use, as always alleged by victims. According to Navuz Harare alone has 20 000 vendors on street pavements in the cbd area as a result of the devastating prolonged economic crisis which has seen unemployment soar to over 80% due to widespread company closures. A Finscope consumer survey in early March showed poverty was worsening as 44% of the population now skip a meal due to lack of money to buy food compared to 29% in 2011. Informationalization of the economy is seen as a sign of formal employment collapse. Muchenje who began vending in 2014 after her husband was retrenched at a city hotel where he had been a chef for more than a decade says street vending is her only means of survival.

“My husband lost his job last year (2014) and he has been job hunting ever since but to no avail. Hence we decided to use the few savings we had and part of his retrenchment package to buy ladies' shoes in bulk to put food on the table and pay rent and rates”, Muchenje said.

“We buy ladies' pumps (type of shoe) in Malawi for resale here and business had been going well. On a good day we take home about \$100 but when sales are low we make at least \$45. My husband sells in the morning from as early as 7am and I then relieve him at around 12 noon till I knock off around 7pm”, she said (Ndebele 2015).

Muchenje's experiences are similar to thousands of vendors selling wares in the area as part of efforts to make ends meet in a country where many have since resigned themselves to self-

employment as jobs are scarce. Street vendors include graduates from Zimbabwe's Universities and colleges which churn out more than 10 000 graduates a year. HCC had launched yet another operation to clean up the filthy city of illegal vendors and demolished about 20 illegal settlements scattered around the city. Previously such missions had failed dismally due to stiff resistance from vendors and considerations of the political impact especially in the run up to elections. The operation was in its third week beginning of March 2015, but the street pavements remain clogged by vendors suggesting the operation is doomed to fail. City vendors in the city centre are the starkest and ubiquitous manifestation of the country's economic crisis that have lasted over a decade. The cbd area, according to the HCC, can only accommodate 6 000 vendors and the rest currently operating in the city centre will be moved to sites in residential and industrial areas. But vendors who are used to brisk business in the busy city centre are resisting the move saying there is little business in residential areas.

"Zvinotirwadza kuti tirikuda kudzingwa kwacho kune ma customer edu mazhinji uye vakatidzinga hatina zvimwe zvekuita nokuti tinorarama nekutengesa (meaning it pains us that the City Council wants to remove us from the streets where we have a lot of customers as we have built a strong client base") said vendor Nelson Tsuro, who sells counterfeit perfumes in the city (Ndebele 2015).

Local government Minister Honourable Ignatius Chombo who urged local authorities to remove all illegal vendors from city centres in towns and cities across the country is on record saying government is aware that times are difficult but citizens must follow government and council directive. But the idea of removing vendors has been heavily criticized. Harare Residents Trust director Precious Shumba said the operation to clear informal traders from the streets is highly insensitive and unjustified.

"The street vendors are innocent citizens who have not begged the government of Zimbabwe for social assistance; they have taken the most appropriate alternative to be able to raise money to meet their essential needs, pay rentals, rates and school fees for their children", said Shumba.

"The government should instead concentrate on reviving industries and strengthening stakeholder participation in coming up with plausible social and economic interventions that address the issue of poverty. Vendors are not criminals".

Shumba maintained street vending is a symptom of economic problems hence government should focus on reviving industries which will subsequently create jobs and as a result there would be fewer vendors on the streets. In an interview in early March 2015 Novuz director

Samuel Wadzanai Mangoma said it is inhuman to remove vendors from the streets without first providing alternative business sites for them.

“Novuz believes in constructive engagement and shall continue to urge the government to engage extensively before implementing anything that affects vendors”, said Mangoma

“We all value cleanliness but we cannot sacrifice livelihoods; our organization is committed to clean cities and we have launched the Campaign is My Responsibility Campaign (CIMRCA) as a way of showing the government and the public at large that vendors are responsible people and if given time to organize themselves they can always ensure a safe and clean environment” (Ndebele 2015).

Mangoma said vending sites identified by the HCC are not enough to cater for every vendor operating in the cbd area and therefore the local authority must first conduct a thorough registration exercise so as to ascertain the correct number of street vendors operating in Harare.

“There are 16 vending sites provided by city fathers, which can only cater for a paltry 6 000 out of more than 20 000 vendors. So there is no need to rush to push vendors out of their current areas of operation without first addressing the fundamentals”, he said.

Mangoma criticized the methods used by Council officials to remove street vendors who most of the time confiscate the vendors’ wares.

“Methods used are inhuman, barbaric and open to abuse by Council officials. We call upon the responsible minister to ensure social accountability at all levels”, he said.

In the meantime the operation to remove vendors has thrown them into a panic mode as they cannot carry out their business with confidence. In addition to the increased vigilance, the Independent found out many were limiting the number of goods they bought for fear of confiscation after arrest while some had set aside cash to bribe municipal police who have acquired a reputation among vendors of being corrupt and demanding bribes. For all the City Councils ambitions of restoring Harare’s former “sunshine city” status, economic realities mean the vendor cleanup operation is likely to be nothing more than a perpetuation of the cat –and– mouse game between vendors and municipal police (Ndebele 2015).

The vending menace in the HCC cbd area is now a cause for great concern not only to the HCC but even to other stakeholders such as the government of Zimbabwe. Madanhire (2015) of Newsday has more on the story with his telling contribution in this discoursing.

New thinking required to solve vending menace (Madanhire 2015)

Harare's cbd area is now choked with street vendors of all kinds who have blocked pavements, increased littering and raised the decibel of noise pollution as they hustle for customers in what is an increasingly competitive environment. The HCC has seen enough and wants to herd the street vendors out of the overcrowded cbd area. There is resistance to this move by the street vendors. They are playing victim and are keen to portray council as an uncaring and reckless institution bent on pushing multitudes into poverty. In the unfolding drama, government appears a silent spectator perhaps not very sure which way to turn and yet a key player in the chaos that has engulfed the city centre. The solution in the vending crisis does not rest solely with city fathers and vendors' representatives, but must involve central government whose political leaders have difficult choices to make. They can elect to sort out the mess and be ruthless with the street vendors in cleaning up the city. To achieve this they have to sacrifice electoral support (Madanhire 2015).

They can allow the vendors to continue to trade unhindered at the expense of formal business which will close shop and relocate to peaceful suburban shopping malls. The end result is reduced taxes and the death of the cbd area. In between this quandary is the solution which the government has been unwilling to find. The current spate of street vending is a product of deliberate state policies and poor planning on the part of the local authorities. As a result Harare is going through a tough phase which will be difficult to solve in the absence of a clear policy direction. Many urban areas the world over experience phases in which central government and city fathers tolerate, then regulate and then evict street vendors in tandem with economic trends, election cycles and urban management systems. Zimbabwe is currently in the throes of major economic challenges characterized by unemployment company closures and redundancies. This phenomenon and the deliberate policy thrust to informalise the economy has helped to increase street vending in the Harare cbd area (Madanhire 2015).

ZANU PF politicians keen to curry favour with elusive urban voters in the last election promoted street vending. First Lady Grace Mugabe had occasion in 2014 to chide the municipal police for harassing street vendors and recognized street vending as the new form of livelihood. Tolerating street vending at a policy level has a major effect on existing by-laws. It elevates the existing vending problems from being a mere urban nuisance to social culture. This renders the by-laws (created to deal with criminal nuisance) ineffectual and disempowers the police to act on the new social challenge. Harare has gone through the first classical phase in the evolution of street vending-tolerance of the menace. The city is attempting to go to stage three – eviction without coming up with a new policy direction to decisively deal with the social problem. This is bound to fail (Madanhire 2015).

Government and the local authority have to deal with a new policy to deal with the problem of street vending as street commerce is not going away soon. Blitzes and police raids will not work. There is already a precedent. HCC and government blitzes have failed dismally to solve the kombi and pirate taxis menace. New thinking is required to solve the problem of street vending (Madanhire 2015).

Chingono (2015) started his discoursing in this Paper like a house on fire. Accusing His Excellence President Mugabe of failure as insinuated by Tsvangirai of the MDC-T the heart stopping accusation was that he (the President) was an utter failure 35 years after assuming power in 1980 and should resign to pave way for another leader with fresh ideas. Details on this sumptuous story – a big prospect to the Readership, coming your way in just a moment.

Mugabe has failed: Tsvangirai (Chingono 2015)

MDC-T president Morgan Tsvangirai had on 16 April 2015 described His Excellence President Mugabe as a failure 35 long years after assuming power from Britain in April 1980. Like a house on fire opposition MDC-T leader had said the 91-year old leader's misrule had condemned millions of Zimbabweans to abject poverty. Speaking at a rally in Mkoba attended by hundred of mainly unemployed youths the no nonsense Tsvangirai said His Excellence President Mugabe – led government should be booted out and never again to be allowed to see the light of day for failing to create employment to benefit millions roaming the streets with nothing to do.

"Mugabe is a testimony of failure", Tsvangirai said

"We do not talk about him anymore because his failure is there for everyone to see", he added to wild applause from the poverty ruined audience (Chingono 2015).

Tsvangirai went on to say that under His Excellence President's 35 years of misrule the majority of Zimbabweans had been reduced to surviving on street vending.

"Today 17 April 2015) we mark 35 years of independence and as we meet the country has been reduced to mass poverty", Tsvangirai lamented.

Tsvangirai said that any government that presides over the unemployment of 85% of the employable population should be booted out of power.

"We cannot say we have prosperity when unemployment is over 85%. In other countries governments are booted out because there is just 5% unemployment rate", Tsvangirai said (Chingono 2015).

During the run up to the 2013 elections, the ZANU PF government promised over 2 million jobs, but has failed to deliver on its promise. Tsvangirai said his party aided ZANU PF during the government of national unity to stop economic hemorrhage.

“Street vending is a symptom of mass poverty”, the former Premier said.

“There is no country that develops with street vendors. We need investments”.

The MDC-T leader said the government was set to retrench over 200 000 workers, a situation that would further plunge into more economic turmoil. Tsvangirai also said the much hyped Indigenization and Economic Empowerment policy was chasing foreign investors and would not dare invest in a country with such harsh laws. He also outlined the MDC’s job creation plan, juice, saying the policy will help create jobs and restore confidence in the economy (Chingono 2015).

The street vendors present an environmental disaster especially during this rainy season. Kunambura (2015) of the Financial Gazette has more on the story which has turned the capital into a jungle.

Vendors turn capital into a jungle (Kunambura 2015)

It was New Year’s Eve in central Harare, the so called Sunshine city. Despite the heavy rains that pounded the capital city that day, shoppers, men, women and children went about their holiday purchases in wet and drenched markets where meat, fish, fruit, vegetables, rat poison, airtime, cell phone and clothing vendors occupied every single space on the street pavements, ever alert to the menacing municipal cops who, like eagles, can swoop any time. Above their heads plush office towers stood side by side with drab rectangular building with weathered walls showing years of neglect. Across the street, a vendor could be spotted relieving himself hiding behind a parked commuter omnibus, a scene also witnessed quite often in the capital’s cbd area, an indication of how things have gone terribly wrong. From there the vendor went back to arranging his tomatoes with his bare unwashed hands buried beneath a sea of honking cars whose sound mixed cacophony of shouts from street hawkers, the bitter cries of semi neglected children and the nauseating clatter of touts soliciting for passengers. For years, unlicensed vendors have been a common sight on most of the major shopping streets in Harare, but with the economic situation further deteriorating and policy makers sleeping on duty, they have now literally taken over the city centre and practically turned it into a jungle where every virtue is trampled underfoot – authorities and citizens watching haplessly as the once Sunshine City is fast turning into an ungovernable metropol – where the law of the jungle now rules pushing the national statutes and the by laws into the shade (Kunambura 2015).

Often pedestrian traffic is forced off the sidewalk and into the street by the vendors now selling everything from phones to second hand lingerie and even puppies and drugs. They have to abruptly jump back onto the crowded pavement for dear life as pirate taxis whizz past spike wielding municipal police officers in hot pursuit in a movie style cat and mouse chase, all in an effort to effect an arrest mainly for the purpose of soliciting for bribes. While scores of vendors have been lining up and clogging the sidewalks flaunting diverse merchandise for a few years now, a whole new era in street vending has emerged since last year in 2014. Stimulated by stiff competition necessitated by a huge influx of vendors on the streets as companies lay off workers and schools and colleges churn out thousands of graduates into a failing economy they find themselves having to shape out or ship out and in that situation innovation carries the day for some and condemns others into history (Kunambura 2015).

During 2014, they introduced a new invention into their trade – they are now advertising their wares through loud speakers and in some cases the messages are pre-recorded and the sounds go non stop all day long. While this innovation has helped them attract customers, it has proved to be a perennial nuisance to the residents and had added pain to the chronic headache the vendors are to policy makers. In addition to the unending noise that these gadgets generate, there is unprecedented commotion in Harare's cbd area ranging from the hustle and tumultuous clamour of touts pushing and shoving each other for passengers, far-splitting commuter omnibus horns; some street vendors selling their wares from parked cars and pushcarts and authorities themselves icing the melee with their devastating war on pirate taxis, kombis and vendors that has claimed a few lives. To try and arrest the situation, the HCC has designated some parts of the streets to vendors but that has failed to yield the desired result. In fact these new stalls have only helped to increase the woes as they have brought up a new breed of vendors while they have been shunned by the old ones who say they are put off by the high fees asked by the local authority and therefore prefer to keep selling from undesigned points and to put up with the daily harassments from municipal cops (Kunambura 2015). A cellphone accessories vendor who operates along Cameroon street had this to say:

“I do not make much money here so it is not viable. They demand rates of up to U\$5 a day which I find to be too high. Their new stalls have been taken over by better established vendors who can afford that. All the people you see selling their things outside the stalls have been here before these stalls were introduced so we wonder where they got their people”.

Shame Makoshori had said that if elected Harare Mayor, the first thing he would do was to clear the streets of street vendors after a group of vendors selling rat and cockroach killers

temporarily camped along Harare Street, making a lot of noise through sound enhancement megaphones. But the current Mayor of Harare, Bernard Manyenyeni had in January 2015 said that the out-of-control vending is a stark reflection of the harsh political and economic realities Zimbabweans are currently facing, adding that to get them under control would be extremely difficult. Manyenyeni said restoring order in the city would not be easy because aside from the economic need there was a “political influence” on the vendors.

“Council has an anti noise pollution commission on its own. We are never in favour of polluting the environment in any way but when we talk about vendors specifically, they are a reality that we have had to face in such a difficult economy. It is also a reality that we have to manage in terms of the influence around the vendors. We sense a political hand in the vendors. Yes there is the economic sense, but we sense a political hand too. So managing them will always be very delicate” he said (Kunambura 2015).

The Mayor had admitted that the stalls which had been hoped to be the panacea to the problems affecting the city have been a dismal failure.

“By far the majority of the vendors are operating away from anywhere designated, it is about whoever wants to be wherever”, he said.

The Mayor’s response from above, to the crisis virtually takes away any hope that the menace would end any time soon. While the advent of the rains steer in the beauty of nature often characterized by blooming flowers and shooting tree leaves the story is not like that in the streets of Harare. Litter from some of the vendors merchandise like green mealies, banana peels are thrown everywhere to combine with rotting vegetable matter that has become both an eye sore and a potential health disaster. The litter exposes residents to waterborne diseases such as cholera and typhoid that thrive during the rainy season. Already typhoid cases have been reported in some parts of the city. Notwithstanding, Harare was also the epicenter of the deadliest cholera outbreak in the country since independence from Britain in 1980 which was declared a state of national emergency and claimed more than 4 000 lives in three months. But cholera is today a preventable disease to which the loss of 4 000 lives in three months is not an excuse (Kunambura 2015).

For 15 years the important urban vote had eluded the ruling ZANU PF. To capture it back ZANU PF had employed a baboon and monkey trick in which all street vendors in Harare were allowed free reign. Zimbowa (2015) is on standby to take us through how the street vendors became victims of ZANU PF corruption.

Vendors victims of ZANU PF corruption (Zimbowa 2015)

Opposition political party ZAPU said vendors are not outlaws but clear victims of policies of ruling ZANU PF, corruption and greed that has brought untold suffering to the citizens of Zimbabwe. Street vendors have swarmed the streets of Harare as well as other towns as the country's economy continues on a free-fall after the 31 July 2013 harmonized elections controversially won by His Excellence President Mugabe and his ruling ZANU PF party. ZAPU spokesman, Nyobisa Noko said his party was saddened that minority white rule has been replaced by black-to-black oppression, where economic participation is based on partisan lines leaving millions of Zimbabweans in abject poverty. He said the ZAPU national executive met in Gweru recently ahead of a planned congress in August and delved on the poor state of the economy. Noko said the meeting expressed concern that most Zimbabweans have been reduced to street vendors as unemployment and poverty continue to ravage the nation.

"The duty of any democratic government is to ensure that strong systems that safeguard people's welfare are in place as opposed to the current situation where citizens are reduced to street beggars", Noko said. (Zimbowa 2015).

Noko continued to lament as follows:

"Today poverty is the chief enemy of all Zimbabweans most of whom have been reduced to street vendors. We therefore demand that government stops harassing these people who are genuinely victims of its ill-conceived policies".

Noko said poverty stricken people had no option but to go vending as the clueless government had no idea what to do.

"We are not encouraging street vending but where will the people get a living?" he said.

"Instead of these running battles with street vendors, government should focus on rebuilding the economy attracting foreign direct investment (fdi) and creating employment".

He said ZAPU's August congress was critical for preparations of elections.

"Ever since cutting the unholy ties with ZANU PF we have been making huge inroads as a revolutionary giant. We managed to field representatives in the 2013 general elections and come 2018, we will go a notch higher", Noko said.

"It is in this spirit that we are currently on a nationwide restructuring exercise from the grassroots with the upcoming congress set to elect a new leadership" (Zimbowa 2015).

Wherever there is street vending there is also the problem of noise pollution. The Harare cbd centre which is home to 50 000 street vendors is no exception to this rule. Chidavaenzi of Newsday has more on the story coming your way.

Noise pollution proliferates in the Harare cbd area. Vendors now a law unto themselves (Chidavaenzi 2015)

Socio-economic hardships in Zimbabwe have tightened over the past two years, driving thousands of Zimbabweans into the streets where they scarp for a living through vending a variety of wares such as bananas, potatoes, vegetables etc. But as more people lost their jobs and were left with no other means of fending for their families, they poured out into the already overcrowded vending lane to try their luck. The current political and economic logjam has brought many industries to a halt, forcing thousands of breadwinners into the streets where there are no alternative job opportunities. It is a dog-eat-dog situation, said a street vendor Benson Muchirahondo (27), adding that he was barely holding on selling an assortment of pesticides that kill rats, ants and cockroaches. He said many other people have also joined the bandwagon and competition was stiff calling for innovative marketing strategies. At his street corner, he used a small loud speaker connected to a recorder where he recorded himself advertising his merchandise and called to potential customers' drawing their attention to his goods.

"This is a skill for the job", he said. "If I don't do this when there are so many of us selling the same things, then I will lose business".

He sat close to his pesticides which littered the pavement where they did not only easily attract the attention of passerby, but also forced them to walk a narrow path as nearly half the pavement had been taken away by street vendors trying to outdo each other (Chidavaenzi 2015).

Noisy vendors a nuisance in the neighbourhood (Chidavenzi 20150

Noisy vendors are a nuisance to the neighbourhood. Chidavaenzi (2015) found time to take us through what he knows about them through his journalistic research. People who had spoken to the print media, in particular the Newsday sometime in early February 2015 said apart from being an eyesore due to piling rubbish and waste which appeared to overwhelm municipal cleaners, noise pollution had been on the rise in Harare's cbd area. Clara Mutema of Greendale said Harare has now been reduced to a jungle dominated by noisy street vendors, some of whom were using loud speakers to sell their goods.

“This is no longer Harare as we know it”, said the 54 year old woman who still yearns for the glory days when the capital was still a Sunshine City (Chidavaenzi 2015).

But it appears that the sun no longer shines in Harare as Matema said vendors who are now a law unto themselves had become a nuisance. Apart from the fact that she had to delicately pick her way like someone walking on egg shells to avoid stepping on vendors’ items, she also had to contend with noise.

“The city is now a mess”, she said. “Of course some of us were now used to walking carefully to avoid stepping on someone’s items on the pavement. Now we have to deal with the noise as well. It is a terrible situation” (Chidavaenzi (2015).

With Harare cbd areas now a jungle of street vendors breaking every law in the statute books, Chidavaenzi had no hesitation but to call them a law unto themselves. Details coming your way in just a moment.

Vendors now a law unto themselves (Chidavaenzi 2015)

With the rate at which vendors have invaded every inch of available space in Harare’s cbd area many residents and ratepayers have been wondering why the street vendors had become so bold that they defied the whole of the marauding municipal police force. The answer is simple, however.

“There is political might behind their unruly behavior. In July last year (2014), First Lady Grace Mugabe poured vitriol on the police, accusing them of harassing struggling vendors who were trying to fend for their families”, said a dejected sounding ratepayer on condition of anonymity.

The First Lady accused the corrupt police force of organizing raids in order to grab freebies when they ran out of tomatoes at home and ordered them to pay like anybody else. She said she had received complaints from female vendors who poured out their grievances to her particularly how they were being chased away from the lucrative cbd streets where they sold their goods. Since then there had been a gradual increase in the number of street vendors operating in the cbd and that has also spawned an increase in improperly disposed waste and noise as a significant number of street vendors having recorded themselves calling out to clients and now simply play the recorders while they sit at street corners.

“We are grateful that the First Lady has given us the green light to sell our goods without harassment so that we can take care of our families” said a street vendor, Tendai Guyo (33).

“Everyone knows that there are no jobs so we must be allowed to sell our items without harassment. We are not criminals” Chidavaenzi 2015).

Tendai Guyo justified using loudspeakers to attract clients saying it was a business tactic meant to lure customers because competition was stiff.

“This is a matter of survival so you try to beat the competition by doing everything possible to get many clients”, she said.

The low fees that they pay appear to have contributed to their increase in the city as they often do not feel the pinch. The HCC principal communications Officer Michael Chideme said:

“Our vending fees are very affordable. They range from US\$1 to \$3 a day for street vendors”

Most of the street vendors now have as free reign and do whatever they want in the city as long as they paid their daily charges”, Chideme however admitted that street vending in their large numbers have significantly contributed to the increase in garbage in the city centre.

“We are working with them to give sustainability to our clean up campaigns and collection schedules”, he said (Chidavaenzi 2015).

Use of relevant by-laws is now a must in order to replace its 1973 and out-of-date noise by-laws in order to keep in line with international trends. Chidavaenzi again is on standby to take us through these measures whose details are on the way coming to you in just a moment.

Use of relevant by-laws (Chidavaenzi 2015)

In order to move with modern trends, the HCC said it was going to replace its out dated 1973 noise by-laws in line with international trends for which it was given a good pat on the back. In pomp and fanfare, the Corporate Services and Housing Director, Josephine Ncube was quoted saying they had drawn lessons from neighbouring South Africa and the overseas Canada, both of whom had updated their noise by-laws.

“It was agreed that although major parts of the by-laws 1195 of 19073 were still relevant, it was more proper to come up with a new set of by-laws (2014) comprising the relevant provision to cover any gaps to ensure it is in line with current global trends,” she said.

Ncube had said that the outdated 1973 by-laws had a raft of fault lines that needed to be rectified. She said other countries set conditions for permit holders by granting them reasonable

exemptions for specific community activities making it easier for local authorities to enforce the by-laws.

“The new by-laws will provide for an appeal process. In the event that the Director’s decision has aggrieved someone, one can appeal to the Administrative court against the decision” she said.

According to communications expert, Norman Muchirahondo, noise is defined as “unwanted sound”. He says environment consists of all the unwanted sounds, in communities except that which originates in the workplace.

“This kind of noise is more severe and widespread than ever before, and it will continue to increase in magnitude and severity because of population growth, urbanization and the associated growth in the use of increasingly powerful, varied and highly mobile sources of noise”, he said.

The enforcement of by-laws that safeguard residents from unwarranted noise could be the answer to the crisis, Muchirahondo said (Chidavaenzi 2015).

Harare’s noise by-laws are under the Urban Councils Act Section 180, Harare (noise) By-laws, 90/95.

“It is unfortunate that not much is being done to enforce these laws and it would appear that there are no fine schedules or arrests for, violation of the regulations”, he said.

“That is the reason why we see all these people using loud speakers and other electronic gadgets that amplify their voices in selling their goods”.

The Environmental Management Agency (EMA) has been working Statutory Instrument (SI) that allows the agency to enforce section 79 to 81 of the environment management Act (Chapter 20:27). The sections provide for fines ranging from level 1 which is \$20 to 14 which forces one to pay US\$5 000 and/or up to 1 year in prison for exceeding noise standards set by the World Health Organization (WHO) at both residential or rural areas. WHO stipulates that noise should exceed 55 decibels during the day and should be less than 35 db (a radio played at moderate volume) at night in residential suburbs. The chaos brought about vending – both legal and illegal – has turned Harare’s cbd area into an eyesore and of late an ear-sore” and undermining its Sunshine City status that peaked in the 1980s and early 1990s, during which time the cbd area was a marvel to behold. But now meat, fish, fruit, vegetables, rat poison, airtime, cell phone and clothing items are now being sold on street pavements. Vendors have been in common sight on Harare’s streets for many years now and the socio economic meltdown has

literally reduced city streets into an urban jungle to resonate with the saying that the economic blues have given rise to thousands of Zimbabwean retrenchees swarming the streets for street vending to eke out a living (Chidavaenzi 2015).

On one of his charm offensives In his home province of Bulawayo the habitually erring and newly appointed Honourable Vice-President Phelekezela Mphoko had called street vendors lazy people for reasons Vendor (2015) had more on the careless utterances by the Honourable Vice-President as below.

Vendors' reaction to Mphoko justified (Vendor 2015)

The angry reaction by the National Vendors' Union of Zimbabwe (NAVUZ) to Vice-President Phelekezela Mphoto's careless utterances were justified. By calling vendors lazy Honourable Vice-President Mphoko insulted the bulk of Zimbabwe's breadwinners and in the process exposed his ignorance given his long absence from Zimbabwe on diplomatic duty abroad. Vice-President Honourable Mphoko has proven that he is a leader that is very much out of touch with events in the country and have no idea of how the ordinary folk are surviving. We are to conclude that the Vice-President is unaware of the dire unemployment situation that the country is facing. Is he not aware of the continuing companies that have rendered millions of Zimbabweans unemployed? Does he not know that were it not for vending, a lot more children would drop out of school, that more families would go hungry or go to the neighbouring South Africa where some of them have fallen victims to xenophobic attacks? (Vendor 2015).

Were it not for the high unemployment rate – 85% in the country – the highest in the SADC region of modest economic growth no able-bodied Zimbabwean man or woman would opt to sell vegetables, fruits and airtime in the streets – amid chaos and running battles with the municipal police – if there were chances of acquiring respectable and better paying jobs. Mind you some of us vendors have good academic qualifications such as university degrees. Turning to vending is for most of us a desperate move in order to survive in a country with a frightening unemployment rate. “It is regrettable that, the Vice-President would call “lazy” people that are doing something to try and make a dire situation better. If the truth may be told, it is our leaders who are lazy as they are not doing their jobs to get the country out of the doldrums. Relying on investor spooking policies such as the Indigenization and Economic Empowerment policy does not bode well for the development and prosperity of a country (Vendor 2015). All this is a result of economic blues which have turned thousands of retrenchees into street vendors to eke out a living in a country of dire political and economic fundamentals.

The baboon and monkey tricks is all it takes to eke out a living in a city of vendors. Chichoni (2015) spared a bit of his precious time to educate us on what these survival baboon and monkey tricks are all about. Details on this coming your way.

Creating value in a city of vendors (Chichoni 2015)

Harare is now a city of vendors. This has now become the official position. One cannot cross a major street or avenue without having to delicately negotiate your way between vendors' goods laid out on pavements or on cardboard boxes at street corners. The street vendors sell everything from vegetables to clothing and shoes. Recently there has been a selling campaign for rat and cockroach killer products with teams marching all over town dressed in bright coloured work suits holding loud speakers blaring loud speaker messages about how effective their products are. At one pavement a guy sits, playing very loudly some music from a battery powered sound system; a marketing campaign for a gospel album. Certainly an effective way to attract potential buyers' attention. Although creating huge inconveniences to both people walking in the cbd area and business owners, most of them small to medium enterprises (SMEs) vendors are here to stay. Asked why they do not want to operate at properly designated premises available in all residential areas, the street vendors say there is little customer traffic there. So they prefer to come to where many customers are found, in the cbd area. It is a matter of survival as there is no other source of income for these fathers and mothers who have families to take care of (Chichoni 2015).

The pressure of low margins are pushing vendors to seek more lucrative avenues for selling their products. This reality is understandable and is a reflection of the current state of the economy where there are more sellers than buyers. It is called a buyers' market. The person with money is king. You have to follow him and beg him to buy. This is especially true if you are selling commodities or those commonly available goods such as vegetables, clothing and trinkets. The law of supply and demand plays an important balancing role in a commodities market. When the supply of a commodity increases, its price decreases. The more sellers there are in the market, the lower the price will fall as each will try to beat the others on price. A buyer stopped to buy bananas from a street vendor at a street corner just near Chichoni's (2015) office. When he said the price was a dollar for 8 bananas, he said he wanted 10 bananas for the same price. He looked at Chichoni's (2015) and saw him looking across the street where another street vendor had parked his trolley.

"Ah boss you are killing me:, he said as he packed 10 bananas into a plastic bag. "I am running a big loss today".

The question is: If he was running a loss, why did he still accept my offer?" Commodity markets are at the mercy of consumers. This is well illustrated by what is happening in the oil market, one of the most important commodities in the world. With prices running at record lows, suppliers are still refusing to cut down on production. Each producer fears that if they cut down on production, the others may not and so they lose. They would rather all suffer from the global prices (Chichoni 2015).

The business environment for the street vendors is not going to get any friendlier soon. More and more products are turning into commodities as suppliers increase while customers or consumers decrease. Don't expect some miraculous improvement. Instead you should change and differentiate your business from the competition in order to avoid the commodity trap. The only way out of the commodity hell is to add customer value. Find ways to create a value that your customers will appreciate and be willing to pay more for (Chichoni 2015).

Let us take one of the most common commodities for example, water: Water is water ... until you put it in a bottle. Once you put water in a bottle, you can then put the water in a fancier bottle and charge some more. You can add some vitamins to it, give it a fancy name, and charge even more. Now you have taken a commodity and you have decommo-ditised it. And then you brand it to keep your price and market going. But the best way to differentiate is to add customer value and this is with better service and customer experience and customer relationship. The most overlooked investment a business can make is a customer relationship. You have to create value for the customer. First understand what a customer values and deliver it and keep track of his changing value needs. Look even at unexplored value, which customers may not yet be aware of. Do not seek to justify customers, which most commodities do. What you want is the "wow" approach and increase value. Great value that will wow your customers. So learn to measure what a customer values and deliver more of it than competition. Value can be a product, service, branding image and customer relationship, or you can continue to play the price game and kill your business (Chichoni 2015). All this strategizing to create value in a city of vendors is a product of economic blues which have sent retrenchees to become street vendors to eke out a survival.

The plan to tax the street vendors who are the poor trying to eke out a living in a drying country and its economy can at best be described as trying in desperation to extract blood from a stone. Mhlanga (2015) is on standby to take us through the moral reasons why it is immoral to overburden the already poor street vendors with a tax burden which would be a travesty of justice to tax the disadvantaged without plugging rampant corruption at the country's border posts by the same ZIMRA officials, Details on this coming your way. Please do not go anywhere until after the nerve wrecking story is over.

Taxing vendors: Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA's) desperate recourse (Mhlanga 2015)

Plans by ZIMRA to tax the teeming ranks of the informal sector in particular, the street vendors, forced into it by the country's obdurate economic crisis shows high levels of desperation for the cash-strapped government whose revenue base continues to shrink as more companies succumb to recession. The misguided move to tax vendors comes at a time ZIMRA is increasingly struggling to meet its revenue collection targets, with government unable to guarantee public service salary date. The financially-hamstrung government had in early February 2015 said the payment of annual bonuses to the civil service had worsened its precarious financial position. Revenue net collections in 2014 stood at US\$3.6 billion against a target of US\$3.82 billion throwing a negative variance of 6%. ZIMRA's declining revenue collection was particularly poor in the fourth quarter of 2014; and the poor trend was expected in 2015, forcing ZIMRA to take drastic measures in its quest to sustain government operations, including company raids which are scatter gun in nature and at worst described as synonymous with sexual harassment. ZIMRA had introduced a tax amnesty to entice its clients to regularize their tax affairs. The amnesty is in respect of any non-compliance which occurred during the period beginning February 1, 2009 to September 30, 2014. ZIMRA had extended the period from six months to 15 months and gives 5% discount on early payments by clients, an indication that the taxman is battling with a shrinking tax base (Mhlanga 2015).

It is estimated that between US\$3 billion and US\$7 billion is circulating in the burgeoning informal sector which currently does not pay any form of tax, and has been celebrated by the government as "the new economy". Renowned economist John Robertson said it was improper and inhuman to yoke street vendors with tax since most of them were struggling to earn a living and came from a poor background with unemployment in Zimbabwe soaring northward of 85%.

"It is a very difficult situation because these people who government intends to tax do not have a choice. If they had one they would rather be formally employed", he said.

"If ZIMRA reacts to the symptoms of the (economic) problems (which is street vending), it then also becomes a problem. These people making a living out of street vending have a problem which can be solved if they find better jobs. But they can't do that at the moment as factory jobs have become scarce, throwing many people on the streets".

Another Economist, Kipson Gundani weighed in saying although it was every citizen's responsibility to pay taxes, levying vendors would impoverish them further as they were barely making enough to survive. He opined that every citizen should contribute to the national fiscus, but these people (street vendors) are earning marginal income".

“Any form of tax will worsen their plight. Income levels of our country are going down and it is proper to be lenient with them. If you look at the issue of vendors mushrooming everywhere in the country, it is a sign of poverty”.

Gundani advised ZIMRA to do its homework before introducing tax to avoid twin problems of over burdening taxpayers, as well as further ruining its fiscal base.

“Before you come up with any form of tax, you need proper data on how much they (street vendors) are earning to determine the tax rate. It can be costly to implement. There is need for a thorough cost-benefit analysis”, he said.

“They (ZIMRA) need to zero in on cost of companies and registration systems because vendors are scattered everywhere”

Government said the taxing of street vendors would be implemented along South Korea’s small-medium enterprises (SMEs) support policies. However South Korea facilitates financing and helps entrepreneurs start businesses through support policies that include start up financing assistance. South Korea’s Financial Supervisory Service (FSS) report released last year (2014) revealed government had launched several programmes to support struggling SMEs, including a fast track programme to simplify loan applications. The FSS said it would encourage banks to extend the programme that would offer guidance to SMEs including a fast track programme that would offer guidance to SMEs on governance and competitiveness (Mhlanga 2015).

In contrast to Zimbabwean street vendors lack of access to bank loans as currently the country is in the throes of a liquidity crunch, partly blamed on banks’ non-performing loan books that have resulted in financial institutions unwillingness to lend, especially in cases where there is no collateral. Tax expert Rameck Masaire said direct taxation of street vendors was never an easy proposition especially in the current environment where regulation of street vendors is non-existent.

“Street vendors are largely of no fixed abode, have no formalized way of doing business, thus their business activities would be difficult to monitor”, he said.

“ZIMRA has to evaluate the existing framework, identify areas of poor performance, and only then come up with new measures with a view to determine the actual situation on the ground. After evaluation, they should come up with new measures otherwise they risk coming up with measures that will meet insurmountable challenges”, Masaire said.

Presenting his 2015 budget last November 2014, Finance Minister Honourable Patrick Chinamasa revealed US\$3.7 billion would be spent on recurrent expenditures such as labour costs meaning a paltry amount would remain for crucial development projects and service delivery. Because of the liquidity crunch the budget was revised downwards to US\$3.6 billion from US\$4.1 billion. Beside this, the financially-hamstrung government is currently mulling a massive retrenchment of 200 000 employees to ease its financial burden, but that too has its problems, not least of which is how to raise funds to pay retrenchees. Presently the government has allowed some workers who have reached retirement age to continue working as it cannot raise their retrenchment packages (Mhlanga 2015).

Takunda Mugaga, an economist said it would be a travesty of justice to tax the disadvantaged without plugging rampant corruption at the country's border posts by corrupt ZIMRA officials.

"There are very few street vendors who have economic might. They are poor and do not have money. It is regressive to tax them because it's targeting the poor while those who are politically well connected trade without paying duties. We are losing a bit of revenue on border posts due to corrupt ZIMRA officials", Mugaga said.

Airtime vendor Masimba Nyangoro said he was not aware of the impending tax, but said he would quit if it became unsustainable.

"I will have to see how much they want from us. I will quit the trade and do something else if the tax burden is high".

Masaire said it was burdensome to tax poor street vendors because they are already contributing to the fiscus through value added tax (VAT) and excise duty.

"Any new measures must be simple and not costly for the taxpayer to comply. The vendors would have to pay their tax through the recognized channel and currently they are already contributing through VAT on their consumption of goods and services", he said.

"Airtime for example is subject to both VAT and excise duty and these are progressive taxes that recognize and already classify the poor from the rich. The more airtime you consume the more tax you pay".

He said to create a fiscal inclusiveness, ZIMRA has to identify projects from which the street vendors realizes income and then use that as a platform to raise a vendor's levy based on products that are widely sought after by the vendors. While government continues to mull the

best way to tax street vendors, what is already clear is that the unpopular move would be very difficult to implement. All said and done, the origin of this fiscal turmoil with street vendors are the economic blues which have turned thousands of retrenchees into street vendors to eke out a living (Mhlanga 2015).

Hanzi nevakare vedu chisingapere chinoshura (meaning everything has a necessary end). So is the discoursing in this Paper. Therefore without wasting his precious little time the Author will declare time for the Summary of the Paper which is up next.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

The purpose of this section is to give a panoramic view of the main events in the discoursing which is the main task to do in this section of the Paper as what follows below.

The grinding poverty in Zimbabwe spawned by a severe liquidity crunch which has led to many companies closing shop to create thousands of retrenchees who have swarmed Harare cbd are to eke out a living (Mangudhla 2015). In order to create orderliness and space in the HCC cbd area Nyavaya (2015) of the Newsday had suggested that the street vendors, now numbering 50 000, relocate to designated sites. But logistical reasons cited by the street vendors militate against this noble idea. Mbanje (2015) of Newsday had reported startling news of mobile butcheries with uninspected meat mushrooming everywhere. In the city centre to trigger fears of disease outbreaks, In April 2015 Matenga (2015) of Newsday again unveils a report that the troubled HCC had for the first time ever set up a council committee to handle the hot street vending issue.

Ndebele (2015) of the Zimbabwe Independent had in February – March this year (2015) reported that the Harare street vendors were caught between a rock and a hard surface in their bid to eke out a living. The municipal police are after them to confiscate their wares as freebies because they are causing litter and noise pollution in the HCC cbd area, while they need street vending in order to survive. Madanhire (2015) of the Newsday pauses for a while to come up with a brilliant idea to solve the menacing problem of street vending in the HCC cbd area than perpetuate a cat-and-mouse game with them for street vending which is not criminal because they are into it through no fault of theirs but because of the economic blues. Tsvangirai leader of the main opposition MDC-T political party had, in frustration, thrown caution to the wind when he attacked His Excellence President Mugabe for turning Zimbabwe, once a food basket into a pariah state through his failed leadership. Street vending is a sign of poverty and does not develop a country as does foreign direct investment (fdi). But foreign direct investors shun Zimbabwe because of the investor spooking policies such as the Land Reform Programme, Indigenization and Economic Empowerment policy etc, so said Chingono (2015) of the Daily

News. Kunambira (2015) of the Financial Gazette laments the capital being turned into a jungle of noise and disorderliness because the street vendors had become a law unto themselves.

For 15 years the urban vote had proved elusive to the ruling ZANU PF party. And to capture it back, the street vendors were allowed free reign in the HCC cbd area with the First Lady Grace Mugabe ordering the Harare Municipal police to let go the Harare street vendor to resonate with the saying that the Harare street vendors had fallen victim to ZANU PF corruption, so reported Zimbowa (2015) of the weekly Standard. Chidavaenzi (2015) of the Newsday could not help watch the once “Sunshine City” of Harare turned into a “beer hall of noise” by street vendors who had become a “law unto themselves”. Vendor (2015) of the weekly Standard torched a storm when he reported that Vice-president Honourable Phelekezela Mphoko had controversially made an utterance to the effect that all street vendors were lazy people by engaging in street vending which was a fitting job for the disabled. In response the disappointed street vendors said the Vice President was ignorant he did not understand the comatose state of the Zimbabwe economy to make those careless utterances. Chichoni (2015) of the weekly Standard had a worthwhile contribution on how the street vendors were creating value in a city of vendors e.g the creation of value to the customer, differentiation etc. And finally is Mhlanga (2015) with his contribution on the taxing of street vendors which everybody attacked as ZIMRA's desperate recourse to revenue enhancement for a dying country and its economy. Hence the economic blues which had turned the thousands of retrenches into street vendors to eke out a living.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Politically in Zimbabwe there has been one leader at the helm for the past 35 years while in neighbouring South Africa there have been three leaders at the helm of South Africa in 21 years i.e. an average of 7 years with one leader compared to Zimbabwe's more than 35 years with one leader since independence from Britain in 1980. This glaring anomaly explains why South Africa is the biggest economy in the SADC region while Zimbabwe is the poorest economy propping the 14 nations that make up the Southern African Development Community (SADC). *Zano marairanwa. Chako wega mukonde wesadza* (meaning two or more minds are better than one).

On the economic side of the story local economists and financial experts have warned that His Excellence President Mugabe's unilateral decision to override Finance Minister Honourable Patrick Chinamasa's recent suspension of civil service bonuses would scuttle any prospects of early economic recovery given the country's squeezed revenue base (Muzulu 2015).

The nonagenarian had taken government and ruling ZANU PF officials on Independence Day on 18 April 2015 when he reversed Honourable Chinamasa's decision to suspend government employees' 13th cheque saying his government could not afford to withdraw workers' legal benefits. Independent economist John Robertson said the awarding of bonuses should be based on state revenue levels.

"The budget is already strained , tax revenues are falling and the 2015 budget is already out of step", Robertson said.

He added:"The Finance Minister, Chinamasa has got a serious problem on how he can make the revenue improve or increase tax on the heavily-taxed taxpayers. The other option is to borrow, but there are a few people ready to lend Zimbabwe money because of its poor record in paying back loans".

The other option, Robertson added, would be to print money, but this is not feasible in a dollarized economy.

"In other countries they devalue their currencies so that they can pay their bonuses, but Zimbabwe can't do that because we don't have a currency", he said. (Muzulu 2015).

Another economist, Maxwell Saungwemwe, said:

"It means the fiscal deficit will continue to balloon as civil service salaries constitute more than 90% of the budget. We are the only country in the region with a huge civil service wage bill".

He said the country had to immediately restructure both the civil service and the Executive if the economy was to perform better.

"Cutting civil service bonuses alone is not the panacea. We need a whole service audit, including trimming of government ministries to, say 16, from the current 31 ministries excluding deputy ministers and getting rid of unnecessary packages, unnecessary deputy ministers, unnecessary globe-trotting by His Excellence President Mugabe and remain with a lean and efficient civil service", Saungweme said.

Zimbabwe currently has nearly 500 000 civil servants with over 70 000 believed to be ghost workers. The cash-strapped Zimbabwe government has since launched a second civil service audit with a view to retrench excess staff (Muzulu 2015).

Finance Minister Honourable Patrick Chinamasa's timely suspension of civil servants bonuses was a bold decision which signalled Zimbabwe's commitment to implement economic reforms under the International Monetary Fund's Staff – Monitored Programme (SMP). For a long time the cash-strapped government was accused of operating in a vacuum by paying civil servant bonuses at a time the better placed private sector had long suspended the unnecessary gratuities citing the prevailing harsh economic environment.

But Honourable Chinamasa's move to save the dying country and its economy was suspended by His Excellence President Mugabe brutally attacking the Treasury "save our soul" (SOS) move, and restored bonuses to civil servants saying that it had become more of a right after an outcry by trade unions and civil servants (Madanhire 2015).

His Excellence President Mugabe's declaration had smacked of political expediency in the face of a burning country and its dying economy. How does one explain this misguided move at a time economy was hurtling towards a precipice? The argonizing truth is that the country's economy aggregate demand with more and more companies closing shop to create high unemployment levels. Street vending has become the order of the day with an incredible 5.7 million Zimbabweans in the teeming informal sector.

The move by Treasury at least showed that the economy was not doing well with the tax collector struggling to collect revenues. ZIMRA is owed over US\$1 billion in unpaid taxes and has been garnishing accounts in a manner synonymous with sexual harassment, something that has not been done in this economy in the past and in a very long time (Madanhire 2015).

Even though the Finance Minister Honourable Chinamasa had recanted saying it was a procedural mistake in the face of a barrage of criticism from His Excellence President Mugabe in the hope of keeping his ministerial job, it is, however, ironic that the cash-strapped government is still to complete payment of 2014 bonuses. If Treasury is struggling to raise US\$260 million monthly salary bill for a bloated civil service, where would they get the bonus money from? The financially-hamstrung government owes US\$ 4 million to state university staff for outstanding 2014 bonuses. The IMF advised Zimbabwe to drastically reduce the number of civil servants who are consuming over 70% of recurrent expenditure through salaries. This means there is little for capital expenditure in areas such as infrastructural development. So suspending the unnecessary expenditure on bonuses was a commendable development as it showed that government was trying to live within its means. Yet, His Excellence President Mugabe thinks otherwise. Where will Honourable Chinamasa get the money to pay the discretionary expenditure on bonuses from? An SMP is an informal agreement between a government and IMF staff to monitor the implementation of a particular country's economic reforms. It does not entail resumption of funding from the multilateral finance institution. What

must be taken note of is the fact when the IMF visited the country last year (2014) they concluded that Zimbabwe had made huge strides in implementing the SMP. The IMF next visit is in September 2015 and people like the Author wonders what conclusions they would make about Zimbabwe (Madanhire 2015).

Zimbabwe has a bloated 500 000 civil service. Bleeding the fiscus is the huge numbers of ghost workers as confirmed by the Comptroller and Auditor General. Zimbabwe has been failing to access credit lines from international financiers due to the debt overhang of US\$10 billion. Besides, Zimbabwe is facing a credit crunch while the financial services sector has taken a stop to a continuous approach to lending due to the high non-performing loans. His Excellence President Mugabe must be reminded Zimbabwe needs right investment policies to attract foreign and domestic investors to bring money and invest in the cash-squeezed country. Unless we are self-serving praise singers we cannot pretend that His Excellence President Mugabe does not know the disastrous implications of his populism on the country's dying economy. He simply needs to know that populism belongs to the Stone Age era. Of all the caring people in Zimbabwe he must not be the only one to erode the gains made by the Honourable Chinamasa on this critical matter of life and death. In fact he must not only seek to entrench his stranglehold on power at the expense of our beloved Zimbabwe – more often than not always in sorrowful crying – “I am suffocating. Please help me”. *Ane nzeve azvinzwira* (meaning that those with ears have heard it from the horse's mouth”) (Madanhire 2015).

With the informative Recommendations now out of the way the Author is now duty bound to give the beloved Reader a cautionary statement to give him/her peace of mind and to allay any fears he/she might have about the authenticity of the facts and figures as contained in this Paper.

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