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WILD Training Equips 80 women on Social Accountability and Gender Responsive Budgeting

Lorraine Phiri and Princess Tshuma



The Women's Institute for Leadership Development (WILD) recently concluded a two-phase social accountability and gender responsive capacity training for 80 women from Bulawayo, Lupane, Plumtree, and Gwanda. This initiative aimed to equip participants with the skills and knowledge to actively engage in local and national decision-making processes, advocate for gender responsive budgeting, track and monitor public spending, ultimately ensuring resources are allocated effectively to improve service delivery within their communities.

Participants learned methods for tracking public spending, including participatory budget expenditure tracking, gender-based budgeting, performance monitoring, social audits, and community scorecards. They also learnt the social accountability systems and the four key pillars of a healthy social accountability ecosystem.

Facilitating the 2 day training, Delta Sivalo emphasized the importance of understanding social accountability as a collaborative effort. He highlighted the need for strengthened relationships of accountability between policy makers, service providers and citizens

"A healthy social accountability ecosystem requires collective action from citizens, responsive governments, access to information, and contextual understanding," Sivalo explained. "There is a tendency to just demand accountability, but it's also about taking responsibility. Building relationships with leaders and maintaining open communication is crucial for responsiveness and long-term impact."

Sharing their key takeaways of the capacity training, Sukoluhle Mhlanga from Bulawayo highlighted the practical tools gained from the training: "I learned about the Freedom of Information Act, citizen monitoring, public hearings, community scorecards, and public interest litigation. These tools empower us to hold government institutions accountable."

Barbra, a participant from Lupane, emphasized the importance of shared responsibility: "As a society, I learnt the importance of being active and responsibly participants. As citizens we need to understand our responsibilities and we also need to understand the roles and the responsibilities of our leaders for social accountability. I also learnt that the Freedom of Information Act guarantees me the right to access public information and inquire about issues that affect us as citizens."

Tahana Dube from Plumtree shared her newfound knowledge: "I learned how to access public expenditure records and advocate for gender responsive budgeting. Previously, I wasn't aware that these records were accessible to the public. The RDC rarely shares these records, and hearing about fee increases (Imthelo yemizi) without understanding the justification can be frustrating. This training has empowered me to participate in consultations, hold authorities accountable and advocate for gender responsive budgeting and transparent use of public funds."

The women who are part of the Women Leaders sounding board are poised to become active transformers of development in their communities. By advocating for gender-responsive services and promoting social accountability, they will pave the way for a more inclusive and equitable future.

RBZ introduces New Gold backed Currency, Zimbabwe Gold (ZiG), to curb Inflation

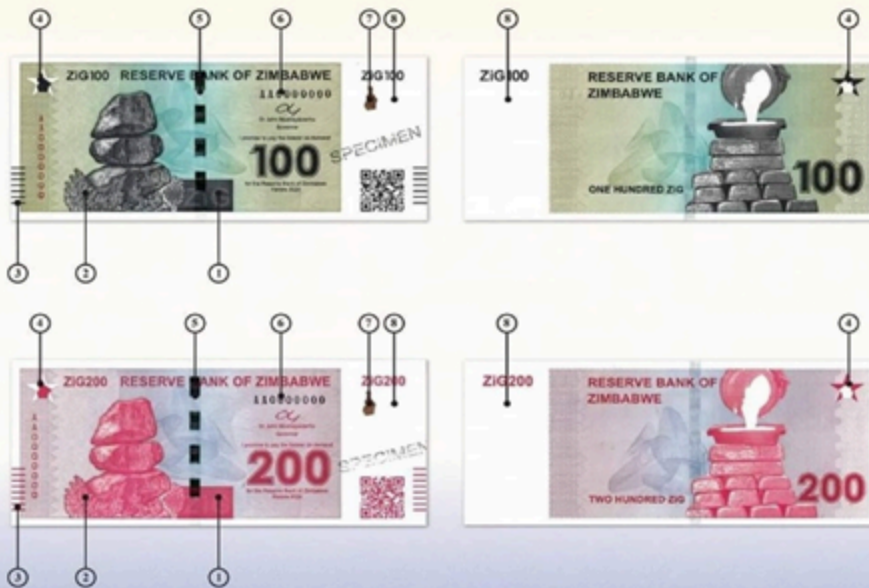
Lorraine Phiri

The Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) announced a significant shift in the country's monetary policy, introducing a new gold-backed currency called the Zimbabwe Gold (ZiG) effective April 5, 2024. This move aims to tackle inflation and stabilize the exchange rate, which have long plagued the Zimbabwean economy.



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"The new currency, ZiG, will replace the Zimbabwe Dollar (Zw\$) and co-circulate with other foreign currencies within the economy," the RBZ stated in its monetary policy statement. This signifies a shift away from the Zw\$ which has struggled with stability.

According to the monetary policy statement the transition to ZiG will involve converting all existing Zw\$ balances in bank accounts, loans, advances, treasury bills, and outstanding auction allotments. The exchange rate will be determined by the closing interbank rate and the price of gold on April 5, 2024. Banks will be

responsible for renaming all ZW\$ accounts to ZiG accounts, while existing Gold-backed Digital Token (GBDT) accounts will remain separate.

Account holders with ZW\$ notes and coins have 21 days from April 5th to deposit them into their ZiG accounts. Banks will accept these deposits during this period.

The Reserve Bank has established a system for those without bank accounts to exchange their ZW\$ cash at specific banks within the same 21-day window.

“The Reserve Bank has made special arrangements for those without bank accounts to swap their ZW\$ notes and coins at POSB and AFC Commercial Bank within 21 days after 5 April 2024,” reads the monetary policy statement.

For larger cash holdings exceeding ZW\$100,000, banks will implement KYC and Customer Due Diligence (CDD) procedures to ensure financial transparency.

ZiG notes and coins shall be issued in denominations made up of 1ZiG, 2ZiG, 5ZiG, 10ZiG, 20ZiG, 50ZiG, 100ZiG, and 200ZiG which will be distributed through the normal banking channels. The coins shall be introduced in due course.

This introduction of the ZiG marks a significant step for Zimbabwe's monetary policy. The success of the currency will depend on various factors, including public trust in the new currency, maintaining a stable gold price and effectively managing the exchange rate.

NETIZENS views on the introduction of the new currency

Zimbabwe's introduction of the ZiG currency has ignited a firestorm of online debate, sparking a spectrum of reactions from citizens. While some netizens adopted a humorous approach, wielding jokes and memes to navigate the situation, others expressed deep concerns about the new currency's long-term viability. A sense of confusion and uncertainty permeated the online discourse, highlighting a perceived lack of clear information and education surrounding the ZiG rollout. This knowledge gap fuelled public apprehension, with some citizens voicing anxiety about the potential devaluation of their banked savings during the currency transition. A significant portion of the online community felt the government's awareness campaign surrounding the ZiG fell short, leaving the public in a state of confusion.

Here is what netizens had to say:

1. At the mouths of many are questions about how the conversions from #Zimdollar to #ZiG has affected people's money. Many already feel the loss of their Zimdollar. It's not clear how this will pan out. What I'm also concerned with is the issue of pricing. How has the Zim government cushioned consumers against distortions in the market in the next few weeks as is the usual practice that customers are ripped off due to processes like these introduced by the #ReserveBankofZimbabwe? How is it going to affect the ordinary person on the

streets, the women who are already hard hit by this economy, children in school, school fees?- @NyariMash.

2. The one thing that former @Reserve Bank Zim Governor, Gideon Gono, for all his other faults, was good at when introducing a new currency, was awareness raising. Those of us old enough, remember when he had those “Sunrise Campaigns.” It’s worth emulating #ZiG., “ said @ C.E Mambo
3. I hope the ZIG works. We've been going around in circles. Zimbabwe #ZIG,” said Nigel Ndlovu.
4. Trust in a currency is the true “currency’ of any currency (Econ 101) Once market stall holders, street tailors, barbers, shebeen queens and vendors start to accept Zimbabwe’s new #ZiG, then we’ll know we are onto something,’ said @ZiChivhu
5. Zig zag zig zag...we're back in nursery school!#Zimbabwe #ZiG-@rudoarmourmusic
6. How many times have we changed currencies? How many times have we slashed zeros? This #ZiG is going to fail. Just like the bond note & the ZWL failed. You can bookmark this post- @tinanyams

El Niño Drought Grips Zimbabwe, Women Bear the Brunt

Jabulile Siwela



Zimbabwe is grappling with a severe El Niño-induced drought, prompting President

Emmerson Mnangagwa to declare a state of national disaster. This extreme weather event threatens to push thousands of Zimbabweans to the brink of hunger, with a significant portion of the population projected to face food insecurity in the coming months. The drought raises particular concerns for women and girls, who are often disproportionately impacted by food shortages. Due to their traditional roles in households and communities, they bear the brunt of the burden when droughts occur. Women are responsible for securing water for families and maintaining hygiene, tasks that become much more difficult during droughts. Furthermore, they are often responsible for caring for children and the elderly, whose needs become even more critical during food shortages.

Climate change has presented more health risks as the drought that currently ravishes the nation has led to poor sanitation and hygiene conditions, this has in turn exacerbated the risk of waterborne diseases and malnutrition. Women are the custodians of family welfare in Zimbabwe, and the primary caregivers in households and communities, so they are at the forefront and receiving end in addressing health issues that emanate from drought.

The El-Nino induced drought that has overstayed within Southern African borders disrupting the entire economic landscape, bringing key economic activities to a sudden halt. Zimbabwe has not been spared and in a patriarchal set up women continue to be largely economically marginalized, even in a crumbling economic environment as a result of devastating effects of drought. Drought has caused mayhem in agricultural activities, disrupting livelihoods depending on farming; this has resulted in women severely affected due to their involvement in farming and small-scale businesses as a means of survival and catering for the needs of their families. Loss of income and assets can have long-term repercussions for women and their families.

Drought leads to water scarcity, many major cities in Zimbabwe are battling severe water crisis with the second largest and former industrial hub being one of the most affected. This in turn has a negative impact on women in terms of sanitation and hygiene. Women are forced to travel long distances to find water for their families. This has resulted in women being overburdened and their well-being largely affected. In December, reports surfaced of women being sexually assaulted in Bulawayo's western areas coming from fetching water.

To effectively address the devastating effects of climate change on women, efforts must prioritize supporting their unique needs. This includes ensuring access to clean water for sanitation, healthcare, and education. Furthermore, empowering women with economic opportunities is crucial. By supporting these areas, we can build resilience and create a more equitable path forward in the face of climate challenges.

Government is crafting ways to mitigate and address the scourge but without empowering women to participate in key decision making processes the efforts may prove to be futile and without any substance. Empowering women to participate in

decision-making processes and providing resources to build their resilience to drought can help mitigate the devastating effects of climate change induced drought on their well-being and that of their families.

Young Women: The Untapped Force for Matabeleland's Development

Jacqueline Ndlovu



In a world facing complex challenges, young women have a crucial role in shaping their communities. Matabeleland region, including Bulawayo, holds incredible potential, yet obstacles hinder its progress. Engaging young women in civic processes is the key to unlocking solutions and building a brighter future for the entire Matabeleland region.

Civic engagement means actively participating in your community. It goes beyond voting, extending to volunteering, advocating for causes, joining community groups, and staying informed about local issues. Young people, specifically young women, bring fresh perspectives, boundless energy, and a desire for a more inclusive society.

Many innovations in first-world countries are driven by passionate young people pushing for better governance and a healthier environment. Programs like WILD (Women's Institute for Leadership Development)'s Women's Leaders Sounding Board is composed of a significant majority (66.1%) of young women under 35. "The power of women and girls as development agents is undeniable. When we invest in their civic engagement, we are investing in a better future for all," affirmed Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Former Executive Director of UN Women.

Unfortunately, due to deeply ingrained patriarchal norms, civic spaces have often been unwelcoming to young women. This inhibits their participation, yet participatory democracy demands they rise up and reclaim their place. As Zimbabwean novelist and activist Tsitsi Dangarembga urges, "Don't wait for someone to invite you to the table, pull up your own chair."

By encouraging young women's involvement, we strengthen democracy and move towards gender-responsive leadership. This means equal opportunities for them to contribute to decision-making processes throughout the Matabeleland region and Zimbabwe at large. Young women collaborating across diverse groups fosters a stronger, more unified Matabeleland.

Young women of Bulawayo, your community needs your voice, energy, and ideas. Get involved, make a difference, and shape the future you want to see. Remember, civic engagement isn't just a one-time event; it's a lifelong commitment to being an active and responsible citizen. Together, let's build a more vibrant, inclusive, and prosperous Matabeleland for ourselves and for generations to come.

The ABCs of corruption

Yollander Millin

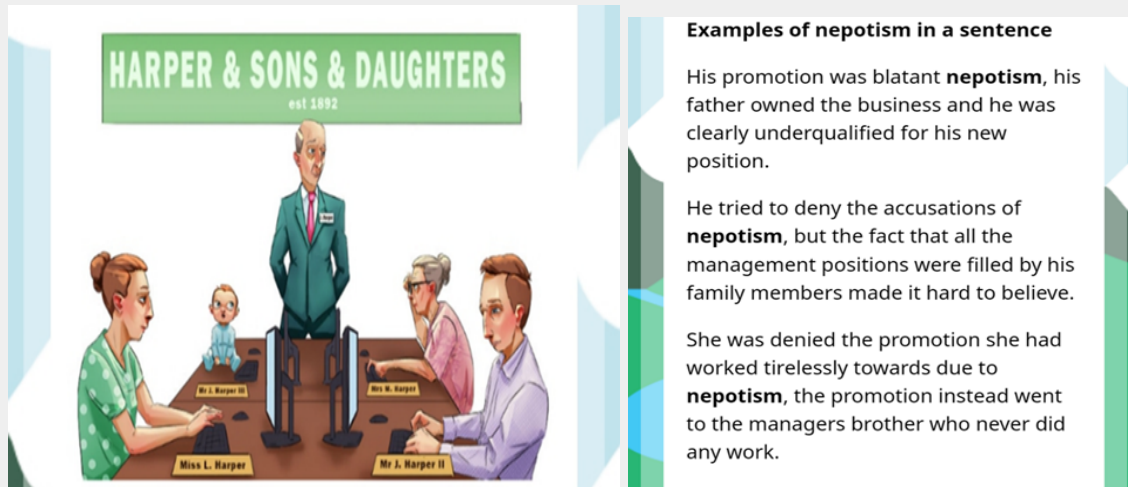
Corruption is like a virus. A worm that has rendered our societies absolutely useless. Being an enemy that comes to steal, kill and destroy as it is inscribed in the Bible. It is well, and it is alive, even from our rudimentary years. It thrives in each and every one of us because in place of Ubuntu, it has become our way of life, our culture.

By way of definition, corruption is abuse of entrusted power for personal gain. This means anyone who has power at any given time has the capacity to be corrupt. Starting at infancy, we already have the audacity to manipulate those that surround us, choosing what we want to eat, to do, or to possess, but in that, making exchange promises because we have already been accustomed.

For example, Pretty, an elementary level youngster, proposed to her brother John that should he eat her sadza for her, she would give him goodies from her lunch-bag. (let's

hold this thought)

Corruption can take many forms, and includes various unethical behaviors like bribery, theft, nepotism among others, that deprive humanity of dignity and respect. Nepotism is the act of awarding someone a job or a service on the basis that they are a friend or they are family and not on the premise of them being actually qualified.



Albert Nyathi, a famous musician from Bulawayo once sang a song long back in the 90s, with the lyrics “*uyu mwana wanhingi... imisebenzi ayikho bayanikana.*” He was alluding to the corrupt act of nepotism where those in position of awarding job places were only placing those that were dear to them. This is sound, flourishing and blossoming in our day to day living today and most businesses are losing profits and closing down due to this element and aspect.

In February in the year 2024, a clerk at a local High School, who was in charge of receiving and receipting school levies was caught at fault after petty cash funds had been constantly falling short. He confessed that he thought these were small amounts that wouldn't be noticed. Yet still that was theft, which is another example of corruption.

The above examples show that corruption can happen anywhere, at school, at work and yes at home. Without probable realization the simplest of things we do and entertain are allowing us to breed unethical generations who find corruption to be the way of life. And, going back to Pretty and John's story, Pretty was being corrupt and that was bribery.

The question to ask ourselves in this becomes, if she is already actively being corrupt, while still in rudimentary level, what will she be capable of when she turns 18, or 35 or just simply, older?(food for thought)

What then are the Basics of corruption?

Corruption can take many forms, and can include behaviors like:

- public servants demanding or taking money or favors in exchange for services,
- politicians misusing public money or granting public jobs or contracts to their sponsors, friends and families,
- corporations bribing officials to get lucrative deals

Corruption can happen anywhere: in business, government, the courts, the media, and in civil society, as well as across all sectors from health and education to infrastructure and sports.

Where does corruption happen: in shadows or behind closed doors. This is often with the help of professional enablers such as bankers, lawyers, accountants and real estate agents, opaque financial systems and anonymous shell companies that allow corruption schemes to flourish and the corrupt to launder and hide their illicit wealth.

Corruption can involve anyone: politicians, government officials, public servants, business people or members of the public.

and

Corruption adapts to different contexts and changing circumstances. It can evolve in response to changes in rules, legislation and even technology.

This article serves as an introduction to the topic of corruption, giving the basics and simple *examples*. In the next article we shall look at the *types* of corruption and eventually we will address the gendered implications of corruption.

... to be continued



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