

Zimbabwe Update Issue 2/17 (July 2017)

Zimbabwe Update is published 3 times a year by Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA). You can subscribe to it and other ACTSA publications [here](#).

Among other issues, this edition of the Zimbabwe Update focuses on:

- *Internal Zanu-PF politics, including violent clashes.*
 - *Criticisms of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission.*
 - *High government expenditure on foreign trips and cars.*
 - *Swedish and German engagement with Zimbabwe.*
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Political & Legal Issues

President Mugabe moves to rein in wife's ambitions?

According to international media reports, Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe has moved to rein in the ambitions of his wife, Grace, to succeed him. The President acted after the country's intelligence chief warned that her campaign may stoke political violence and faces opposition from within the military.

Happyton Bonongwe, who heads the Central Intelligence Organization, has argued that the ruling Zanu-PF must mend relations with the veterans of Zimbabwe's independence war. While the veterans accused President Mugabe of mismanaging the country and denounced him in July last year, they recently recanted following an intervention by Bonongwe and military chiefs. Thus the President is said to have asked Grace to tone down her public criticisms of the veterans.

In addition, it is claimed that Bonongwe told the Joint Operations Command, a group of senior military and intelligence officers who support Deputy President Emmerson Mnangagwa, that serving troops strongly oppose a faction of younger party officials known as Generation-40 (G40). G40 back Grace, who is widely seen as Mnangagwa's main rival. While a degree of factional fighting plays into President Mugabe's hands, making it easier for him to retain power, he does not want it to spill out of control. Thus the President is said to have asked his wife to take a softer approach towards Mnangagwa.

"Control of the military and the security apparatus is a key factor in deciding who holds the reins politically," Showers Mawowa, deputy director of the Southern African Liaison Office, told Bloomberg. "As things stand, it seems like Mnangagwa has the upper hand."

Zanu-PF factions in violent clashes

There were bloody clashes at the Bulawayo provincial headquarters of the ruling Zanu-PF on 21 May, as members from the party's rival factions fought one another over the fate of under-fire political commissar, Saviour Kasukuwere. Kasukuwere is perceived to be a member of the G40 faction opposed to Vice-President Emmerson Mnangagwa and those party activists who are loyal to him, known as Team Lacoste (because Mnangagwa's nickname is 'The Crocodile').

The fight, which led to the stabbing of one party district youth leader, broke out after a group of party supporters opposed to Kasukuwere stormed a provincial co-ordinating committee (PCC) meeting chaired by provincial leader, Dennis Ndlovu, and disrupted it, arguing it was unsanctioned. The protestors were also demanding the reconstitution of the party's provincial executive, following the resignation of some provincial youth executives.

Bulawayo city centre district youth chairperson, Magura Charumbira claimed he was stabbed on the head and face by his rivals. "I had just arrived here in the morning, when they caught me and accused me of leading the people who are calling for the ouster of Kasukuwere," Charumbira said.

Ndlovu said political tension had been brewing for quite some time. "One day, when I came here, Charumbira emerged and questioned why I was still coming to the office, saying they had ordered me to leave," Ndlovu said. "I stayed away for some time and each time we planned to book a PCC meeting, they would threaten to disrupt it. On Saturday [20 May], we cancelled the meeting, but because Vice-President Phelekezela Mphoko had said he is coming... we had to proceed with this meeting."

MDC-T rejects rumours of plot to oust Tsvangirai

The Movement for Democratic Change led by Morgan Tsvangirai (MDC-T) has dismissed as baseless reports that some party activists are attempting to oust the veteran leader of the opposition party. The MDC-T criticised recent stories in some media outlets that have sought to portray an image of discord and disunity among the top leadership of the party.

In a statement, MDC-T said: 'it has been wrongly and maliciously reported that there is a plot to oust President Tsvangirai. Nothing could be further from the truth... all genuine MDC cadres, from the branch level up to the national standing committee, know that Morgan Tsvangirai is our undisputed leader. Any insinuation to the contrary can only be the work of our detractors working in conjunction with the discredited CIO [Central Intelligence Organization] within the faction-ridden and collapsing Zanu-PF regime'.

MDC-T also said that Vice-President Thokozani Khupe has been working with Dr. Joice Mujuru of the National People's Party, together with other female politicians in Zimbabwe from various opposition political parties, at the Women Electoral Convergence (WEC). The WEC is a multi-party forum composed of female politicians who are mobilising women to vote in the 2018 general election.

Recently MDC-T has been consistently saying that Tsvangirai is a visionary leader who is set to romp to victory in the next year's presidential election. However, many analysts who are critical of Zanu-PF say that it is unlikely that any opposition party or parties will be given an opportunity to defeat the ruling party through free and fair elections.

Zimbabwe Electoral Commission faces criticisms

In June, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) faced criticism after it announced that physical proof of permanent residence would be a requirement for those wishing to register to vote. This represented a shift from an earlier proposal that sought to allow prospective voters to provide registration officers with an affidavit confirming their place of residence.

In a statement, the opposition MDC-T said: 'it is a fact that the majority of urban dwellers are lodgers and tenants who will not easily have access to proof of residence such as utility bills'. Tawanda Chimhini, the executive director of the Election Resource Centre, a civil society group, said: "the ERC is deeply worried in that a strict requirement on proof of residence will

disenfranchise hordes of prospective voter who invariably could fail to obtain the required proof.”

Earlier in the month, MDC-T urged ZEC to use its powers to stop Zanu-PF from marshalling citizens to President Mugabe’s various rallies around the country. MDC-T spokesperson, Obert Gutu, also urged Southern African Development Community leaders to exercise their influence on Zimbabwe, fearing that Zanu-PF’s actions could make it impossible for opposition parties to have a chance of success in next year’s elections.

The MDC-T calls for intervention follow similar condemnation by the Zimbabwe Peace Project, a civil society coalition, which has said forcing people to attend rallies was a violation of citizens’ freedom of association. Quizzed over this in parliament, Vice-President Emmerson Mnangawa said it is “not Zanu-PF policy to force people to attend Zanu-PF rallies.”

NGO faces police harassment

The Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe (ROHR) International is taking a leading role in a new initiative, the Zimbabwe Peace Actors’ Platform (ZimPAP), which seeks to prevent violence and make space for democracy. Backed by 18 NGOs, ZimPAP aims to train 100,000 civilian peacekeepers to overcome fear and intimidation, particularly in rural areas, during next year’s elections.

On 9 June, about 150 ROHR International supporters staged a peace march in the centre of Chitungwiza, in defiance of an attempt by the police to stop them. ROHR International president Ephraim Tapa said that the police later raided the homes of several of the organisers and ordered them to report to the police. Tapa confirmed that the police had earlier refused to allow a peace march planned in Harare at the end of May. He said: “this is against the constitution which stipulates that people only have to notify the police about a demonstration, not get permission. It is the police who are being lawless and we must challenge this.”

On 14 June, ROHR International published a press release, saying that its representatives would be handing themselves over to the police in Chitungwiza later that day, and that the representatives would be accompanied by a staff member of Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights. The press release went on to condemn the Zimbabwean police and urged them to let people exercise their rights freely. More recent reports suggest that ROHR International continues to face police harassment.

Economic & Social Issues

Zimbabwe send huge delegation to International Labour Organisation conference

Zimbabwe’s cash-strapped government sent a huge delegation comprising of 30 officials to the 106th International Labour Organisation (ILO) conference in Geneva, Switzerland from 5 - 17 June. This decision has raised serious concerns, particularly at a time when the government is struggling to fund critical commitments.

Other countries in the region sent smaller delegations to the conference. For example, South Africa’s delegation consisted of seven people, while Malawi selected 15 representatives. Concerns have been raised by stakeholders within the labour movement that the huge Zimbabwean delegation was just a means for influential individuals to milk the Treasury. The amount of money that the government spends every year on foreign trips has not been made

public. However, in 2011, the then Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Tendai Biti, said Zimbabwe was expected to spend at least US\$50 million on foreign trips that year alone.

Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions secretary general, Japhet Moyo, told the *Financial Gazette* that the Government of Zimbabwe are: “not respecting the ILO regulations on sponsorship of conference delegates. Only one delegate from labour and business will receive sponsorship and the rest will be funding themselves, yet there are people being funded by government to [go to] Geneva who are not going to be participating in any committee.” He continued: “countries which respect workers’ rights have no need to bring such a huge delegation because they have nothing to defend. This could only be avoided by respecting labour rights. However, the government officials who made the decision to send 30 people took advantage of the trip to award themselves of extra income.”

IMF says Zimbabwe economy still very weak

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) says Zimbabwe’s economy is facing difficulties as a severe drought and slow reform momentum have led to high expenditure levels since late 2015, despite subdued revenues. It says spending pressures stem from high employment costs, government transfers to support specific economic sectors and elevated discretionary expenditure.

These remarks emanate from an IMF team led by Ana Lucía Coronel, which visited Zimbabwe in early May, to hold discussions with the national authorities, private sector representatives, and civil society, in the context of the 2017 Article IV Consultations. In a statement, the IMF team said ‘the economy is facing difficulties... With a difficult external environment limiting access to foreign inflows, the ensuing large fiscal imbalances are being financed by domestic borrowing. The expansionary fiscal stance and curtailed net capital flows have resulted in cash shortages, hampering economic activities’.

The statement continued: ‘the recovery in agriculture and mining will drive growth this year. However, maintaining the growth momentum will require action to expedite the authorities’ plans to reduce the deficit to a sustainable level. Excessive government spending, if continued, could exacerbate the cash scarcity, further jeopardize the health of the external and financial sectors, and, ultimately, fuel inflation’.

Meanwhile Zimbabwe has secured a syndicated loan put together by the African Export-Import Bank that will enable it to clear US\$1.7 billion of arrears with the World Bank and African Development Bank. In making the announcement, Finance Minister Patrick Chinamasa did not name the lenders, but said the rate on the loan is cheaper than that charged by the World Bank.

Government spends millions on cars, thousands on health

President Mugabe’s government spent nearly US\$8 million on cars for ministers and government departments in the first three months of 2017, while committing a little over US\$442,000 to public hospitals over the same period, Treasury data shows. The government plans to spend US\$17.76 million on condition of service vehicles for its top officials in 2017-2019, according to the Treasury’s estimates of expenditure.

Critics accuse the government, which ran up a US\$183.2 million budget deficit in the first quarter of this year, of prioritising senior officials’ perks at the expense of investment in infrastructure, education and public health. They also slate Mugabe for under-funding public hospitals, while he routinely seeks treatment abroad.

The Treasury bulletin for the quarter shows that government collected US\$869.2 million, but spent US\$1.052 billion. Of the total Q1 spend, US\$879.1 million was recurrent expenditure, mostly salaries. The government spent US\$142 million on capital projects. Of this, US\$24 million went towards the strategic grain reserve, US\$40 million to farm input schemes and US\$17 million was spent on dams and rural boreholes. A further US\$15.3 million was spent on grading and re-gravelling roads.

The government had paid US\$5.42 million for condition of service vehicles for ministers and senior government officials, and a further US\$2.363 million for vehicles for various government departments. The same report shows that the government has spent US\$400,000 on the revitalisation of central hospitals and US\$42,939 for provincial and district hospitals. The government allocated US\$282 million to public health in this year's budget, averaging only US\$22 per citizen.

Sweden supports UN while Germany criticises business climate

At the end of May, the Embassy of Sweden and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) signed a US\$8 million agreement, giving a boost to the Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund (ZRBF). The ZRBF is a five-year multi-donor fund managed by UNDP in close collaboration with various government ministries and parastatals. The ZRBF officially launched in May 2016 with financial and technical support from the European Union and the UK's Department of International Development. Its overall objective is to contribute to increased capacities of at risk communities to protect development gains and achieve improved well-being outcomes in the face of shocks and stresses.

At the signing ceremony, Mr. Bishow Parajuli, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative said: "since the launch of the ZRBF... some 407,000 labour endowed vulnerable people in nine rural districts benefited from climate-smart agriculture; [support for] nutrition and livelihoods; productive asset creation; access to finance and value chain development; and community-based natural resource management." The Swedish Ambassador to Zimbabwe, H.E Sofia Calltorp said: "resilience lies at the heart of Sweden's new five-year strategic commitment to Zimbabwe in fighting poverty, environmental degradation and in ensuring absorptive and transformative capacities in the face of climate change."

Meanwhile the German Ambassador to Zimbabwe, Thorsten Hutter, has told legislators in Germany that the business environment in Zimbabwe was not conducive for investment. His critique of the business environment cited a number of issues, most notably too much government interference in businesses, cash shortages and unfriendly laws. Zimbabwe attracted US\$319 million in foreign direct investment last year compared to US\$421 million in 2015, according to the UN's *World Investment Report*.
