

Zimbabwe update

This month's update focuses on the first international tour of Zimbabwean Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai, including the outcomes of the meetings he held with Western leaders to secure economic aid and political support.

This issue also looks at the Zimbabwean government's new policy on development funds, the COMESA summit held in Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe National Students' Union's concerns about higher education. We also highlight the controversial beginning of the constitutional process and the violence against women's rights activists witnessed by Amnesty International.

You can find more details about all of the stories covered on the [ACTSA website](#).

Zimbabwe Prime Minister's Western nations' tour

In the final stage of his tour, Morgan Tsvangirai visited the UK, where he received Gordon Brown's assurance that "Britain will do everything it can to support [him] in fulfilling the promise that change offers." Gordon Brown said that Britain's assistance to Zimbabwe will rise by an additional £4 million for food security and £1 million to provide text books for the newly reopened schools, reaching £60 million this year in total. Despite acknowledging "great signs of progress", the UK Prime Minister specified that aid will be delivered through aid agencies, not the government. At the joint news conference in Downing Street, Tsvangirai claimed "irreversible change was now taking place in Zimbabwe towards a transition to democracy and elections." During the rest of his tour, Tsvangirai pushed for Europe to re-engage with Zimbabwe, achieving mixed but generally positive results. German Chancellor Angela Merkel pledged further assistance, promising Tsvangirai \$34.8 million and Norway gave further \$6.5 million, stressing the fact that "the funds will mainly go to areas that Mr Tsvangirai's party, the MDC, is responsible for".

President Obama meets Prime Minister Tsvangirai

As part of the United States leg of Morgan Tsvangirai's fund-raising tour of Western capitals the Zimbabwean Prime Minister met with President Obama. In a meeting at the White House Obama expressed his "extraordinary admiration for the courage and tenacity" of Zimbabwean Prime Minister and pledged US \$73 million to help Zimbabwean people. However, aid will be channelled through NGOs and will not go directly to the unity government "because we continue to be concerned about consolidating democracy, human rights, and rule of law," Obama said. The conundrum posed to Prime Minister Tsvangirai throughout his trip was that he maintains the process he is now leading is an irreversible process of transition to stabilisation, democracy and a new constitution yet says he needs support to make the process irreversible and admits human rights continue to be violated in Zimbabwe.

Cabinet empowers Finance Minister over aid to placate donors

The Zimbabwean coalition government has adopted a new aid co-ordination policy. A Multi-Donor Trust Fund will be controlled by the Ministry of Finance and foreign aid will not be channelled through the Reserve Bank. The new policy shows that "Zimbabwe is ready to receive aid and use it effectively for the benefit of the people of Zimbabwe" said Minister of State Gordon Moyo.

News in Brief

- In an interview with Al Jazeera Morgan Tsvangirai said "we have managed to arrest the hyperinflation conditions, from 500 billion per cent to three per cent currently," claiming that Zimbabwe has made dramatic economic progress.
- Justice Minister Patrick Chinamasa said that the government will not adhere to the SADC Tribunal land ruling. Chinamasa argues that the regional court has no legal force in Zimbabwe
- "Although the inclusive government is rightly focusing attention on economic stabilisation and recovery and political allocation of power it should not lose sight of the people's needs and aspirations," the Students Christian Movement of Zimbabwe says in a recent human rights publication

WOZA members released after beatings witnessed by Amnesty

Members of the activist group Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) were released on bail on June 19 after being arrested during a peaceful demonstration marking the International Refugee Day. The women were brutally beaten by police officials under the eyes of Amnesty International Secretary General Irene Khan, who was in Harare to present the findings of her mission to Zimbabwe. Khan immediately urged local authorities to be "consistent with international human rights laws" and unconditionally free the women. Khan took up the issue during her meeting with Tsvangirai in London on June 22 and told the Prime Minister that "while there is less political violence now in Zimbabwe, the human rights situation remains fragile".

Students' Union questions the validity of exams

Higher Education Examinations Council (HEXCO) results for November and December 2008 were released on Monday 1 June, after six months of waiting. The Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU) claimed that the delay in the release of the results compromises their credibility and had a negative impact on the 2009 academic calendar for students in polytechnic colleges. ZINASU is also concerned about the continued closure of the University and points out that Professor Levi Nyagura, who suspended over 60 student activists since 2003, has "dismally failed" as a Vice Chancellor.

COMESA Customs Union launched in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe hosted the 13th COMESA summit on 7-8 June under the theme: "Consolidating Regional Economic Integration through Value Addition, Trade and Food Security." The leaders of the 19 member states launched a customs union at the event, which was delayed twice because of Zimbabwe's political turmoil, as a follow up to a Free Trade Area. "COMESA's share of global trade needs to be increased and that will be the second stage after the launch of the union." Sindiso Ngwenya, COMESA secretary general, said.

The constitution-making process and the Kariba Draft

The Zimbabwean Parliament's Standing Rules and Orders Committee embarked this month on a series of provincial public hearings on the crafting of the new constitution after approving the US \$36 million budget for the constitution-making process. A political battle is expected since ZANU PF has adopted the Kariba Draft Constitution as the basis of any new constitution, whilst the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), among others, is strongly set against it and will boycott any process that is based upon it. The Kariba Draft, which is supported by Mugabe, says the president would remain the head of state and government, as well as commander in chief of the defence forces.

Dignity! Period

Access to sanitary products for women in Zimbabwe is worse than ever, for many women sanitary protection is a luxury they can no longer afford. Women have been forced to use newspaper, rags or leaves as a substitute for sanitary pads which can cause serious infections for which there is no available medication.

ACTSA's Dignity! Period campaign provides sanitary towels to women in Zimbabwe, just £3 a month provides sanitary towels for 3 women for a year.

[Visit ACTSA's Dignity! Period web pages to make a donation or learn more.](#)



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Trade Unions

The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) this month criticised the government's plan of privatisation of state enterprises. The ZCTU pointed out that privatisation would have severe social consequences, including job losses or insecurity and poor service delivery. Rejecting the Cabinet's top-down approach, the ZCTU has also demanded that stakeholders be consulted to develop a common vision.

Media

A new weekly newsletter, entitled "From the Office of the Prime Minister", was launched on June 17 by Tsvangirai's office. "This is in line with the new governance culture of transparency and accountability" the newsletter read.

Rights

Four Great Zimbabwe University students were acquitted by a Masvingo Magistrate on June 6, after they appeared in court on charges of public violence. The charges arose in April when students demonstrated in the streets of Masvingo against high tuition fees and the decision by University authorities to bar students who had not paid fees from writing examinations.