



**MY
SOCIO-ECONOMIC RIGHTS!**

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FOREWORD

Reading this booklet will transform your world. Knowing that the necessities of life, such as food security, the highest possible level of health, education, housing, basic public utilities, transport, decent work and a living wage are your socio-economic rights will empower you to defend and exercise them. These rights are entrenched in various international law instruments such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the United Nations Charter. In other countries such as South Africa, these rights are enshrined in the Bill of Rights section of their constitution.

Poor governance and corporate-driven globalisation are some of the forces behind the undermining of these rights. Corporate-driven globalisation promotes the interests of powerful multinational companies and those of developed nations at the expense of the developing ones. The effects of corporate-driven globalisation should be understood in the context of the adoption of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) by the government in 1991, and the ratification of various trade agreements such as the SADC Trade Protocol, the COMESA Free Trade Area and NEPAD, among others. ESAP marked a paradigm shift in policy from the state-led development of the 1980s to a market-oriented economic system. ESAP entailed the liberalisation and deregulation of the economy. It resulted in massive cutbacks on government expenditure and support of essential services and basic socio-economic rights, which drastically increased the cost of basic services such as health and education and eliminated support for producers and consumers.



The following discussion, therefore, is a status summary of your socio-economic rights in the wake of globalisation and the current economic crisis. We would like to thank SASK for providing funding for this project. We are also grateful to Alice Mutema, Emmaculate Moyo and Tafadzwa Mahere who updated and edited this booklet as well as Tony Namate who did the cartoon sketches.

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FOOD SECURITY

The UN international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights decrees
 A descent living for each person and their families i.e. sufficient food...

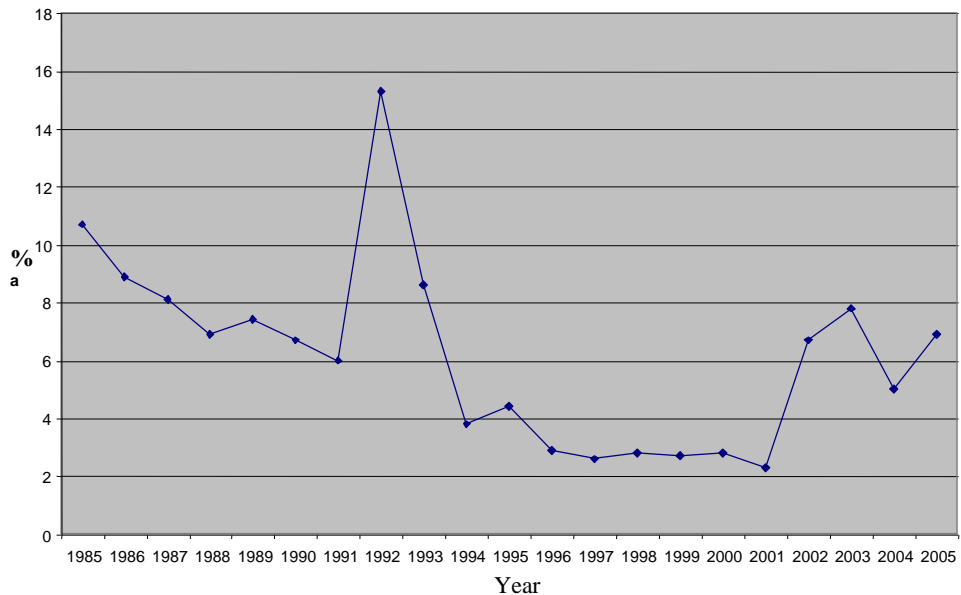


During the first decade of independence, (1980-1990), the government's agricultural policies were targeted at stimulating food production to meet national food security needs. In all these years, the government played an important role in promoting the agricultural sector. The government subsidised commercial food production, provided agricultural infrastructure, inputs and credit mainly for maize production. During these years, Zimbabwe was known as the 'breadbasket' of the SADC region. The government managed to provide surplus crops and agricultural produce, to the extent that it could feed the nation and contribute to food security requirements within the region. As a result of food self-sufficiency, the government encouraged the diversification of agriculture from food to non-food cash crops in order to generate household income and foreign exchange earnings.

However, the introduction of ESAP in 1991 exposed the agricultural sector to market forces. Consequently, government drastically cut expenditure on agriculture. It also decontrolled food prices, reduced subsidies, liberalised the input and foreign exchange markets and also removed import restrictions. Furthermore, the agricultural sector shifted its production forces from food crops, such as maize, to cash crops, such as tobacco and horticultural products. This had an adverse effect on the country's food security situation.

Figure 1 shows the share of government allocation to the Ministry of Agriculture during the period 1980-2003. It is clear that the period of the implementation of the structural adjustment reforms between 1991 and 1995 resulted in a huge cut in government expenditure on agriculture.

Figure 1: Agriculture's Share of Govt Expenditure 1985-2005



Source: Budget Estimates, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development-various issues

Expenditure on agriculture has declined from a peak 16% in 1971 through 7.8% in 1992/93, to a low of 2% in 2000. This has contributed to reduced production and increasing risk of food insecurity.

The right to food security was also undermined between 2002 and 2004 as was the case in 1982 and 1992, due to drought. Furthermore, the haphazard land redistribution programme and lack of both experience and capital among the new farmers has increased the level of food insecurity. Zimbabwe requires approximately 2.5 million tonnes of maize for human consumption and livestock feed. However, production has been inadequate for the Zimbabwean populace.

Table 1: GMB Maize Purchases, Average Percentage Share from Large Scale Commercial Farming Areas (LSC), Small Scale & Communal Sectors (SSC & C), 1982-99

	1982-85	1986-90	1991-95	1996-99
LSC	68.0	50.9	34.2	25.5
SSC & C	26.0	49.1	40.9	39.3
Imports	6.0	0.0	24.9	35.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Calculated from Government of Zimbabwe, 2001: *The Agricultural Sector of Zimbabwe: Statistical Bulletin*, Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement.

As is shown in Table 1 above, the share of marketed maize from the large-scale sector declined from 68% during 1982-85 to 34.2% during the reform period. The corresponding share of marketed maize from the communal areas initially increased from an average of 26% during 1982-85 to 49.1% during 1986-90, before declining to 40.9% during the reform period (1991-95). The communal sector failed to maintain its growing share of marketed maize in the 1990s. Due to the resultant deficit between the nation's requirements and what the nation was producing, GMB purchases increased from 6% in 1982-86 (no imports during 1986-90) to 24.9% during the reform period 1991-95 and 35.2% during 1996-99. This suggests growing food deficits during the 1990s, which was the period of the structural adjustment programme.

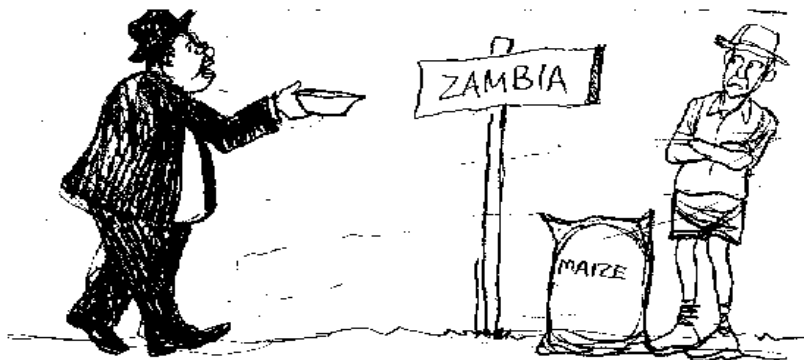
According to the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC) rural food security survey carried out in 2003, the number of rural population requiring food aid was expected to increase from 720 000, to around 2 million. It was also estimated that about 66% of the 3.8 million urban population was not secure in terms of food availability. Zimbabwe's grain imports have continued to rise during the past few years. Statistics from the South African Grain Information Service (SAGIS) show that Zimbabwe is importing between 5 060 and 8 000 tonnes of maize every week as compared to Mozambique's 396 tonnes, Lesotho's 1 160 tonnes, the Democratic Republic of the Congo's 216 tonnes, Botswana's 598 tonnes and Namibia's 9 tonnes (*Financial Gazette*, 6-12 January 2005, pg 2). This high level of imports leaves the country with huge budget deficits. The same report revealed that more than 2.4 million people are starving and malnourished. Not only is the country facing shortages of maize, but of wheat as well. An article from the *Financial Gazette* of January 6-12 2005 stated that there were only four months of wheat stock left and the country was gearing itself up for more imports. There was also a decrease in the total area planted for wheat for the 2004/05 season from 80 000 hectares to 33 000 hectares. A report from FEWSNET also revealed that Zimbabwe requires about US\$85 million for wheat imports for 2005 so as to satisfy an estimated 260 000 metric tonnes deficit for the crop. This deficit will later translate to widespread bread shortages. It, therefore, does not come as a surprise that bread is in short supply.



BREAD BASKET: A Zimbabwean farmer delivers maize to Zambia...



A Zimbabwean farmer is chased off his farm...



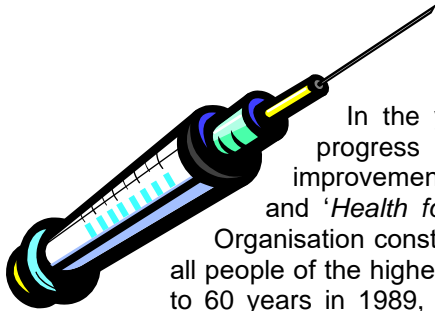
BASKET CASE: An ex Zimbabwean farmer exports food to Zimbabwe!

Nevertheless, the government has a national duty to provide food to all people irrespective of their affiliation. In order to ensure national food security, marketing strategies as well as transport infrastructure need to be developed and maintained to facilitate the movement of food to needy areas.



The UN international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights decrees:

The responsibility of governments is to improve community healthcare and to prevent the emergence of epidemics, occupational diseases and other diseases

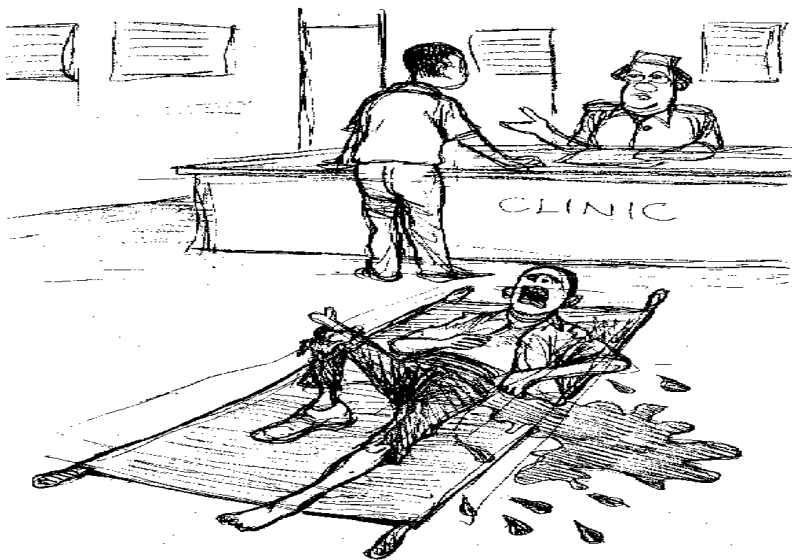


In the years following independence in 1980, Zimbabwe made impressive progress in health care and the country experienced 3 years of dramatic improvement. The government set up policy objectives such as 'Equity in Health' and 'Health for all by 2000.' This was in line with *Article 1* of the World Health Organisation constitution, which mandates the organisation, to aim for the 'attainment by all people of the highest possible level of health.' Life expectancy rose from 55 years in 1980 to 60 years in 1989, immunisation programmes were extended to cover over 80% of the population and infant mortality rates had fallen to 46 per 1000 live births. The under-five mortality rate decreased from 108 per 1,000 in 1980 to 78 per 1,000 by the year 2000 then decreased to 67,0 per 1,000 in 2004.

The introduction of ESAP in 1991 by the government placed the achievements of the country's post-independence health policies under threat and reversed most of the gains that had been realised. Life expectancy at birth has fallen from 60 years in 1980 (66 years in 1997) to 35 years in 2003. Thus, the marked progress in terms of health care delivery of the 1980s has largely been reversed in the 1990s and the new millennium, especially in view of the current health crisis being experienced in Zimbabwe.

Since ESAP, significant reductions in the amount of resources available for investment in the health sector have been recorded. Most hospitals are now run on a cost-recovery basis with a business focus. Under such market-driven systems, the patient is now viewed as a client and services have been 'commoditised.' The removal of subsidies for health care has resulted in the 'commodification' of health delivery, when in fact it is everybody's socio-economic right.

Most hospitals, including the government ones, dictate that before a patient receives any medical attention, a deposit of up to several million dollars has to be paid. This means that if a patient arrives at a hospital, bleeding profusely and on the verge of death, without the deposit, he or she will be denied the right to health care and medical attention.



"Before we admit him, find out if he has cash upfront, or if he has medical aid..."

The introduction of user fees – initially on the recommendation of the World Bank (through ESAP) as a mechanism for meeting targets to reduce the fiscal deficit has excluded poor people from the health system. Consequently, most people have resorted to using traditional medicines and practices, which include witch-hunting as an answer to the medical challenges they face. This has undoubtedly resulted in untold suffering within communities.

John's (Not his real name) story

John's wife who was pregnant was admitted into Harare General Hospital. She required a Caesarean section, after giving birth to the child, the Hospital refused to release the baby until John paid the medical fee. Furthermore the hospital, threatened to transfer her to the hospital hostel were she would reside and perform community service for a period equivalent to the outstanding fee.

Due to the budgetary constraints imposed by the structural adjustment programme, the health care delivery system in Zimbabwe has virtually collapsed. Expenditure *per capita* on health has fallen steeply, eroding the quality of health provided. The *per capita* allocations to health have declined from a peak of US\$23.60 in 1990 to US\$14.00 by the end of 2001. The health care delivery system has collapsed at a time when 3,000 people are dying every week because of HIV/AIDS. This means that 18 people die every hour of the disease and 3 in every 5 of those affected are women. Clinics and hospitals have insufficient drugs and other medicines. This has been exacerbated by the fact that there is an acute shortage of health delivery staff including doctors and nurses. This is primarily the result of the migration of Zimbabwean medical staff to developed countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. Zimbabwe has become the training ground of medical staff for these developed countries largely because globalisation allows for the mobility of skilled labour.

Furthermore, diseases that had been tamed such as malaria and tuberculosis have re-emerged as leading killers. Communities, especially women, often with inadequate resources, have taken up the task of caring for the sick. The HIV/AIDS epidemic, malaria, tuberculosis and diarrhoeal diseases are placing even greater pressure on the health care sector. This is worsened by the fact that there has been a reported increase in the incidence of all these diseases in the past 10 years. HIV/AIDS in particular has had an adverse effect on the whole economy. The number of children orphaned by AIDS in Zimbabwe was estimated to be approximately 780,000 in 2001 and the figure is projected to be close to one million. Of the total number of Zimbabwean children who are 14 years old and below, 240,000 were estimated to be living with the HIV/AIDS virus. Because HIV/AIDS has compromised the general immunity of the population, there has been an increase in the incidence of clinical malaria and other opportunistic diseases.

Another major challenge that globalisation has presented vis-à-vis the health care sector in Zimbabwe is that most drugs and other medication, including antiretroviral drugs, have been placed on the market, rendering them largely unaffordable for the ordinary Zimbabwean. Multinational companies are the producers of antiretroviral drugs and because they are business-oriented, they make them very expensive and most people cannot afford them. This means that even the clinics are often short of medication. Moreover, although new hospitals have been built, they have not eased the pressure on the health delivery system because they are upmarket, such as Baines Avenue Hospital (Harare), Mater Dei Hospital (Bulawayo), Servants Avenue Surgical Unit {S.A.S.U.} (Mutare). The exorbitant fees charged at these medical centres are beyond the reach of most Zimbabweans. This, therefore, means that most Zimbabweans cannot access health care, which undermines the right to attain the highest possible level of health that all people should be in a position to exercise.

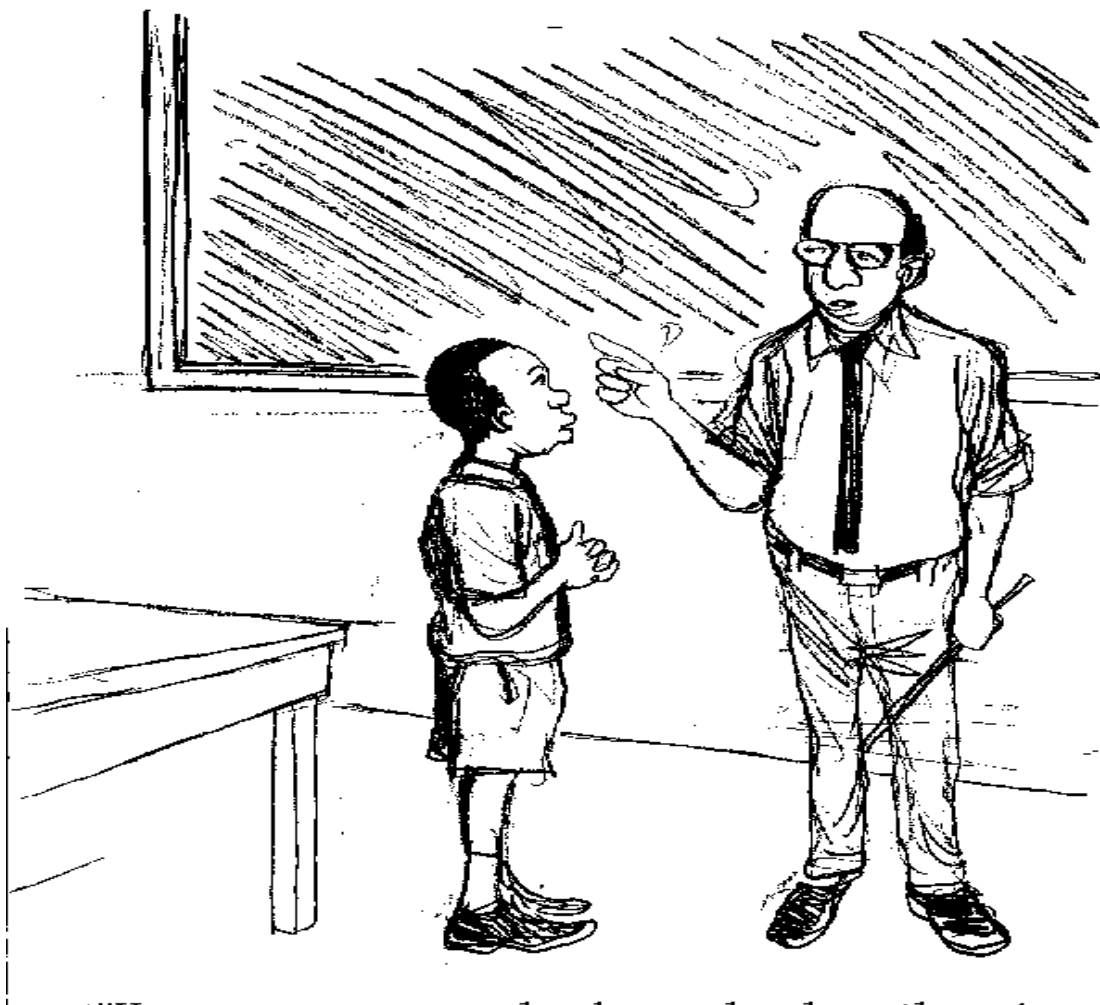
The UN international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights decrees:

Primary education shall be compulsory and available for all.

EADUCATION

The attainment of independence saw the rapid and massive expansion of the education system in Zimbabwe. Enrolments at primary school level doubled from 1,2 million in 1980 to 2,4 million by 1993, and 2,5 million by 1999. The total number of primary schools increased from 3,180 in 1980 to 4,723 by 1999, while the number of teachers doubled over the same period. Enrolments at secondary school level increased from 74,321 in 1980 to 834,880 by 1999, while the number of schools rose from 197 to 1,548 over the same period. In spite of the gains made during the 1980s, globalisation, through the structural adjustment programme, has resulted in the current crisis being experienced in the education sector, which is characterised by a reversal of most of the gains that had been realised.

As a result of ESAP, education is now viewed by government as a commodity that should be placed on the market instead of an economic right that all citizens are entitled to. Cost-recovery has become the main focus, and government support for education has declined. This has left school authorities with no option but to charge and hike fees. As a result of this collapse of government support for education and the rising cost of school fees, enrolments have gone down.



"You must not come back to school until you've topped up your school fees."

Furthermore, the massive rise in enrolments within a short period of time has had an adverse impact on the quality of education being delivered. The localisation of examinations has

suffered a major blow following the perennial problems and corruption at ZIMSEC, where students' results have often been tampered with. Over the years, some students have received results for examinations that they did not even sit for, while others did not receive any results despite sitting for the exams. This has had a negative impact on the credibility of localised examinations, severely compromising the right to education. Furthermore, with pass rates below 25%, the education system has become wasteful and has been criticised for being too academic in its focus.

Because of its supply-bias, the education system is failing to meet the needs of the economy, creating a mismatch between demand and supply. The formal sector cannot absorb more than 10% of the school-leavers with secondary education who are entering the job-market each year.

The issue of school drop-outs presents another dimension to the school-leaver problem. Calculations on data from the Ministry of Education on school drop-outs (survival rates) show that on average, the survival rate between grades 1 and 7 for the period 1980/86 to 1989/95 is 75% for both sexes, 77% for boys (1990-95) and 74% for females (1990-95). The survival rates for grade 7 to form 1 for the period 1981-96 are 73% for both sexes, 76% for boys and 69% for girls. Those for form 1-4 averaged 70% for both sexes, 74% for boys and 65% for girls over the period 1987/90-92/95. The mean transition rate from form 4 to lower VI during 1989-93 is only 7.1%. These figures show that the drop-out rates are high, with those for girls higher than those for boys. Unfortunately, these drop-outs have very little education and hence they have the weakest links in the labour market. This results in a drastic increase in the levels of unemployment. Thus, the policy goal of making education universally accessible is receding. Poor quality education reduces labour market competitiveness and productivity, both of which are prerequisites for national development. It is, therefore, important to bring the right to education back to the top of the policy agenda and to ensure that the quality of education provided is in line with the demands of the economy.

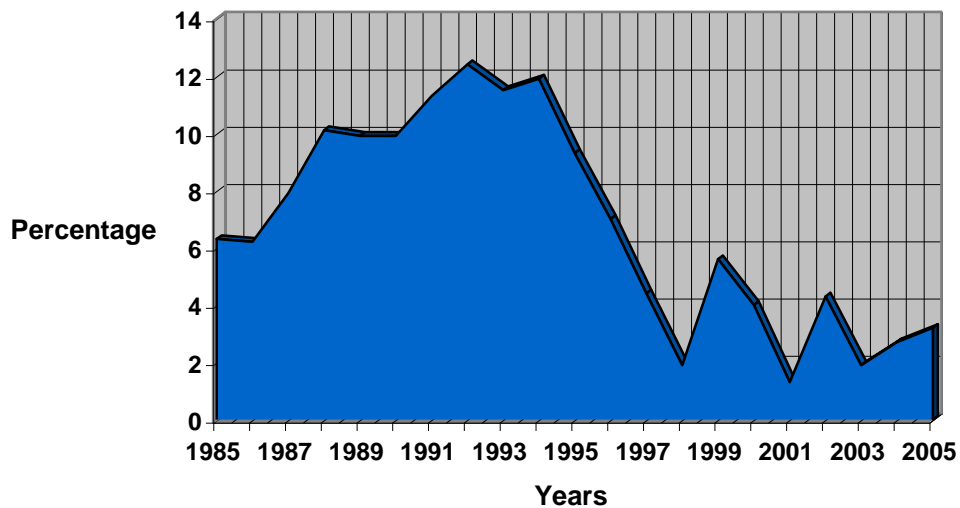
HOUSING

The UN international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights decrees:

A descent living for each person and their families
i.e....suitable accommodation

Shelter is one of the most fundamental economic rights, yet, for most Zimbabweans, it still remains one of the most elusive. Housing availability is very important for the livelihood of all people; thus, it should be available to all. It has become a serious challenge to secure decent accommodation especially in urban centres, for example, it is estimated that over 2 million Zimbabweans are on the housing waiting list in Harare alone. For many, the accommodation that is available is usually unaffordable or unsatisfactory. Many of the existing housing schemes are high-cost and hence, restricted to high-income earners. Low-cost schemes are unable to cater for the high number of low-income earners. Consequently, many low-income earners are left with no means by which to exercise their economic right to shelter. The result of this is the mushrooming of substandard structures, overcrowding and squatting, especially in the cities. Even rented housing is now beyond the reach of ordinary Zimbabweans. The housing market does not cater for the needs of middle-income earners. This has been worsened by the fact that government has drastically reduced expenditure on housing over the years as is shown in the graph below.

Figure 2: Central Government Expenditure on Housing & Public Works



The intensity of this crisis has been exacerbated by the government's 'bid to restore sanity' by way of 'Operation Restore Order' which has left thousands of people homeless and defenceless as their right to housing has been undermined. With hardly any low-income housing scheme being implemented, the only route to obtain a house is through the market, which is way out of reach for most workers. There is, therefore, need to bring the housing issue back into the public domain as an economic right.



'Government said that they would built better houses for us after Murambatsvina, but these tents they gave us are worse that the two roomed house that I had built with my own money.'

ASIC PUBLIC UTILITIES

Public utilities, that is, electricity, water and sanitation are basic necessities of life. At independence and in the period before ESAP, the government and local authorities provided these services with relative efficiency. The system was organised with the municipalities and city councils receiving subsidies from the government. They did not need to implement cost recovery plans because the government was in a position to finance their operations to a large extent, meaning that the cost of their service provision was incorporated into the national budget.

During the course of the workshops for Socio-economic rights, facilitators from Bulawayo went back home after almost a week at the workshop. She found that all the perishables in her freezer such as meat and milk had gone bad and the house was filled with a terrible smell. Her neighbours informed her that there had been no electricity in the area from the time she left home. As a result she lost her whole month'

However, with the introduction of ESAP in 1991, the situation changed. In the absence of budgetary allocations, municipalities that provide water and sanitation services and other service providers, such as ZESA Holdings, were left with no option but to recover their full operating costs from the consumers. The population was growing but the provision of essential services was not expanding at the same rate. Service provision was delegated to local authorities without budgets from national government,

resulting in the deterioration of the quality of the services provided. The prices were and are still too high for the ordinary working people to afford.

Moreover, due to the shortage of foreign currency for the procurement of electricity to complement the local supply, there has been load shedding which has resulted in the irregular supply of electricity. The absence of forex has also resulted in the unavailability of water treatment chemicals. Consequently, there have been cases of people drinking water that has only been treated partially, which has caused the surge of diseases such as cholera and dysentery.



Another consequence of ESAP was the outsourcing of the refuse collection service to private companies. As a result, there have been cases of refuse not being collected for up to a month at a time, creating a serious health hazard for city-dwellers. Furthermore, the rapid growth of the urban population has resulted in the shortage of housing in the towns and hence overcrowding in the existing houses. This has resulted in the breakdown in sewerage systems, as they are unable to cater for the high number of people that use them. This is largely a result of the failure by city and town-planning authorities to match housing expansion and service provision with the growth of the urban population.

The municipalities have also been unable to maintain the existing equipment utilised for service delivery. This has led to the equipment breaking down. A good example of this is the water and sewerage pipes in the city of Harare that have of late been bursting at an increasingly frequent rate. This is primarily because the pipes have not been changed or refurbished from the time that they were meant to cater for a considerably smaller population. This also results in the wastage of treated water as it takes the responsible authorities a long time to rectify the problem. As a result, the residents of most towns in Zimbabwe have resorted to reporting any burst pipes through the newspaper in the hope that something might be done. The city of Chitungwiza has also experienced the recurrent flooding of streets with sewage.

Therefore, there is urgent need to bring these basic utilities back into the framework of people's socio-economic rights that ought to be prioritised.

RELIABLE AND AFFORDABLE TRANSPORT



The provision of an efficient and reliable transport system is an important aspect of national development. It is a prerequisite for national competitiveness in a globalising world. In urban centres, efficient and affordable transport is essential. Inefficient transport systems result in the loss of income and productive time. Therefore, the government should guarantee reliable and efficient transport as a basic right to all citizens.

At independence, the public transport system in towns was organised around the Zimbabwe Omnibus Company (ZOC). This continued for about a decade and during this period, there was no competition from private operators. The transportation system was well planned to the extent that if a bus to a particular destination arrived late, one could approach the inspector-in-charge and immediate action would be taken to rectify the situation. Although the government tried to ensure that all areas were accessible by road and provided some buses, ZUPCO lacked the capacity to meet the growing demand for transport. Eventually, the system became inefficient, resulting in serious transport problems.

The introduction of ESAP in 1991 saw the deregulation of the transport sector. Private transport providers with smaller capacity vehicles, in the form of commuter omnibuses, compared to ZUPCO's conventional buses, entered the urban transport business. The transport situation improved significantly and the commuter omnibuses could cope with the

demand for transport until about the year 2000. The lack of a coherent and forward-looking transport policy allowed the private operators to go for a long time without any strict supervision or control from the government. This resulted in commuter omnibus fares rising beyond the reach of ordinary workers. Because there was no mechanism in place to monitor the public transport system, the situation deteriorated and this severely compromised the affordability and availability of public transport. This has been worsened by the chronic fuel shortages that the country is experiencing. These factors contributed to the eventual collapse of the previously organised system.

In an attempt to alleviate the public transport shortage, the government has reintroduced ZUPCO buses to complement the provision of transport by commuter omnibuses. The fares charged by the state-operated ZUPCO buses are often lower than the ones charged by the commuter omnibuses and thus, more affordable for ordinary Zimbabweans. However, buses are still few and far between. Therefore, most commuters have had to resort to using the privately run commuter buses, which charge high fares, especially at times when fuel is in short supply, where the fares can be increased by up to 3 times the normal price. This move has also had the adverse effect of reintroducing ZUPCO's monopoly in urban areas as witnessed by the recent re-designation of transporters' pickup points outside the city centre except for those for the ZUPCO operators, in spite of the latter's limited capacity.

The shortage of petroleum fuels in the country is also contributing to the shortage of public transport in the country and as such, the right to efficient and affordable transport is being undermined. It is thus important that the government addresses the problem of foreign currency shortages so that the country can procure adequate fuel supplies, especially for the public transport sector.

The government has a mandate to ensure that public transport is available and affordable for all and that the system is efficient and organised in a manner that allows for the efficient mobility of all commuters.

DECENT WORK

The UN international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights decrees:

The right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his



the majority of workers and Zimbabweans in general have been denied this right. The undermining of this right is shown by poor morale among working people, shirking, moonlighting, multiple-jobbing, low productivity, high turnover and corruption, which undermine human development.

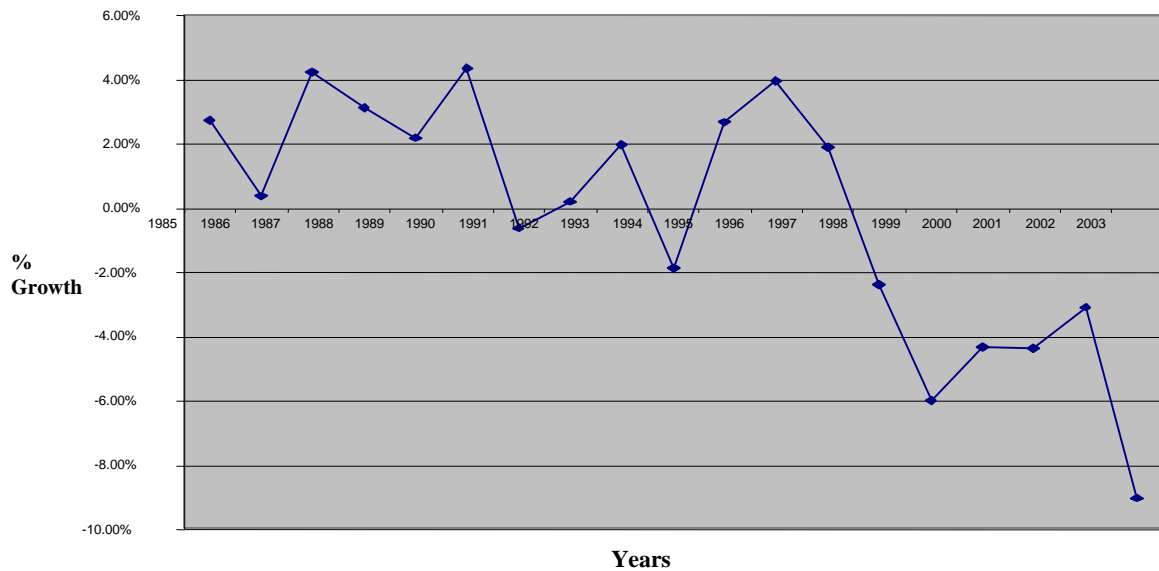
At independence and in the early 1980s, positive steps were taken by the government to ensure that people attained their right to decent work. In 1985, the Labour Relations Act was passed. It repealed the Industrial

Conciliation Act of 1934 and incorporated the Minimum Wages Act and the Employment Act of 1980. For the first time, it outlined workers' fundamental rights and set up mechanisms for collective bargaining at the national, sectoral/industrial and shop-floor levels. It also established a comprehensive and elaborate dispute procedure.

Furthermore, the socio-economic climate was relatively conducive to the attainment of formal employment and so most people were afforded the right to decent work, which was regulated by the government. The informal economy accounted for less than 10% of the total labour force, while the formal economy accounted for 47,7%. Zimbabwe's post-independence government officially acknowledged the existence of the informal economy and removed the restrictive migration laws to allow the rural people to enter the cities. This resulted in the urban population almost doubling between 1960 and 1980. The 1982-85 Transitional National Development Plan (TNDP) analysed the problems of the informal economy and came up with recommendations on the way forward. It pointed out that the informal economy's existence was in line with the rapid population growth, the failure of the formal economy to absorb the new entrants into the labour market, rural to urban migration and the rising cost of living. As a result, the share of informal economy employment grew from less than 10% in 1980, to 20% in 1982, 23% in 1986, 27% in 1991 and close to 50% by 1998.

The introduction of ESAP in 1991 resulted in a new strategy. The emphasis was mainly on the attainment of economic stabilisation, single-digit inflation levels and a sustainable budget deficit. Here, the main thrust was to formulate a good macroeconomic policy that would make growth possible and create employment. However, the structural adjustment reforms did not address the question of whether the formal sector would create enough jobs, within a reasonable amount of time, to address the serious problems of unemployment. This resulted in large-scale unemployment, further undermining the right to decent work.

Figure 3: Annual Growth in employment levels, 1985-2003



Source: Calculated from CSO unpublished data

Figure 3 above shows the annual growth rate in employment levels between 1985 and 2002. The graph indicates that from 1998, employment declined and recorded a negative growth rate from the period 1999-2002. Workers' security of tenure was also negatively affected, substantially eroding gains that had previously been made. It became easier to hire and fire employees. Thus, most workers lost their jobs during the ESAP period and their right to decent work was undermined. Currently, using a narrow definition of employment, the Central Statistical Office (CSO) rates unemployment at 11%.

Definition of unemployment

¹ *Strict Definition of Unemployment and 7 Days Reference Period*

² *Broad Definition of Unemployment and 7 Days Reference Period*

³ *Twelve Months Reference Period*

Strictly Unemployed persons are persons age 15 years and above who, during the reference period were: - without work, currently available for work and actively seeking employment.

Broadly Unemployed persons are persons age 15 years and above who, during the reference period were: - without work and currently available for work Income Consumption & Expenditure Survey (ICES);

ESAP, together with the current economic crisis, has resulted in the use of non-standard forms of employment, including casual labour and contract employment. The increased casualisation of work has left many workers in insecure employment situations. Petrol attendants, for example, never know when the next delivery of fuel will occur, meaning that they are constantly in a state of job insecurity. Such a shift in the forms of employment has resulted in poor working conditions and trade unions have been weakened as their members have been retrenched.

The informal economy is usually referred to as the 'survivalist sector' mainly because it grows rapidly as unemployment and poverty levels increase. The informal economy has, however, suffered a brutal attack from the government under 'Operation Restore Order'. The government justified the operation on the grounds that the informal economy had become the

hiding place for criminals, people involved in illegal activities and those who do not practise hygiene. It contends that these elements had to be flushed out so as to restore order, cleanliness and hygiene, thereby improving the country's image as well as the economy.



Although it can be argued that this is a positive move, the livelihoods of many people have been affected and many jobs have been lost. This, therefore, justifies the call for a strong campaign for decent work. The goal of attaining full-time, freely chosen and decent work should be consciously promoted by all stakeholders.



**The UN international covenant
on economic, social and cultural
rights decrees:**

A decent living for each person and their families...

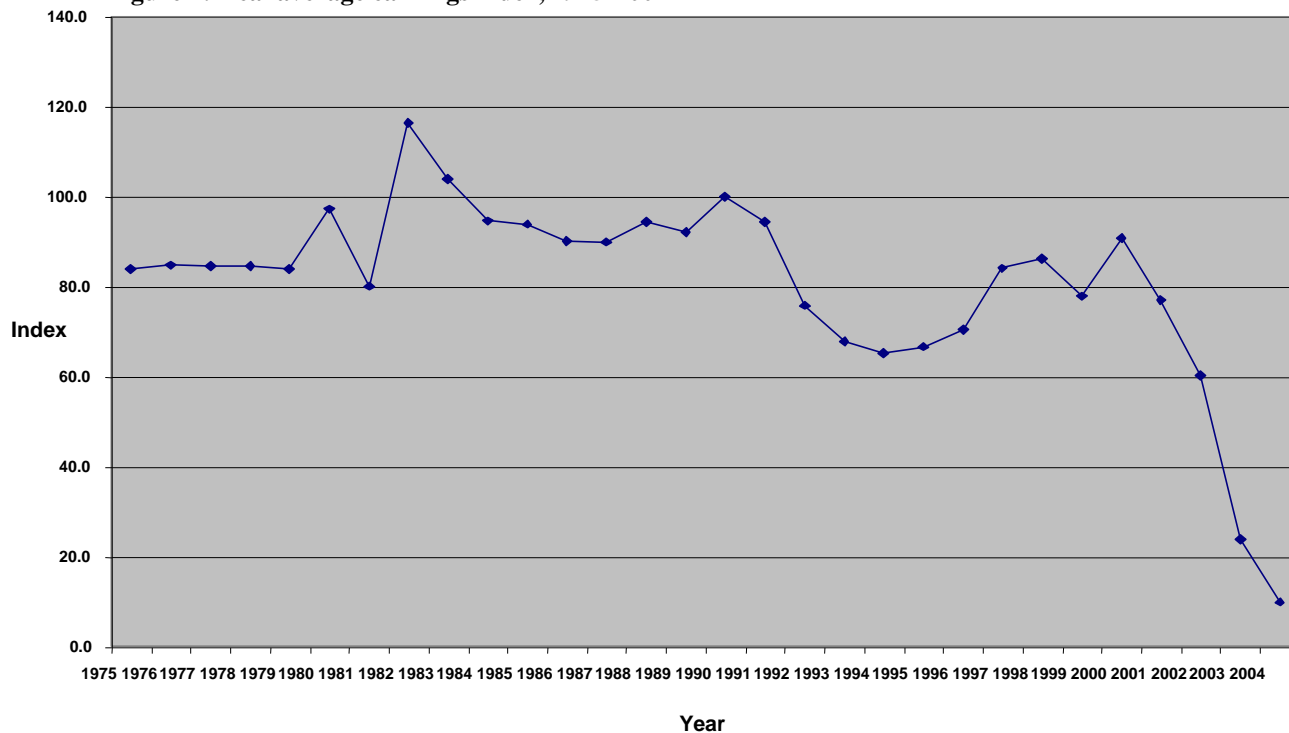
The right to a living wage, one that can enable an average family to meet their basic requirements, is a necessity for all working people. At independence, the government acknowledged the need to provide a living wage for the working people and thus, it intervened extensively in the labour market. That intervention was meant to promote security of employment; to raise the standard of living of the people, in particular, the lowly paid; to narrow income differentials and to reduce inflationary pressures. As such, in September 1980, a commission of inquiry under the chairmanship of Roger Riddell was established to look at incomes, prices and conditions of service, with a view to correcting the anomalies inherited from the pre-independence economic system.

The Riddell Commission Report observed that, "...the necessity for action and for the introduction of policies directed specifically at alleviating poverty and narrowing differentials is apparent...'. It is at this point that the idea of a Poverty Datum Line (PDL) was introduced. The PDL represents the cost of a given standard of living that must be attained if a person is deemed not to be poor. In an effort to provide workers with a living wage, which was above the PDL, the government passed the Minimum Wage Act of 1980. According to Riddell, minimum wages should be based solely on the needs of workers and their families, and not on the type of work performed or the place where the work is carried out. It is only through adopting the principle of need, that present (and future) anomalies can be removed. Thus, even if a person is employed as a domestic worker or a factory worker, the criterion of need should determine minimum wages. On the basis of the PDL of an average family of six, a father, mother and four children, the 'ideal' target income paths were plotted for both the urban and rural areas. It was then recommended that the target for wage policy was to reach 90% of the PDL by mid-1984 (after three and a half years). The remaining 10% was left to employers to reward their workers for productivity.

Unfortunately, employers responded to the minimum wages principle by retrenching workers. To forestall unwarranted retrenchments, government passed the Employment Act of 1980. This regulation required that ministerial approval be obtained before any retrenchment or dismissal was made. To discourage resort to employing casual workers as a way of circumventing the Employment Act, the rate at which such employees are remunerated was set at double that for permanent workers. At that time, government engendered a concern for the workers and protected their right to a living wage. Minimum wages were announced on May Day as a reflection of how important the concept of a minimum wage was in the government's labour policy.

However, the adoption of ESAP in 1991 severely threatened the gains that had been made by the government's labour policy since independence. This is reflected in Figure 4 below, which shows that between 1991 and 1995/96, which is the period in which ESAP was implemented, real wage earnings dropped. The graph reveals that real average earnings have dropped to the extent that they are currently below the pre-independence level. This can largely be attributed to the structural adjustment reforms, which caused inflation levels to rise to three digit figures and the economic crisis, which have caused wages to collapse.

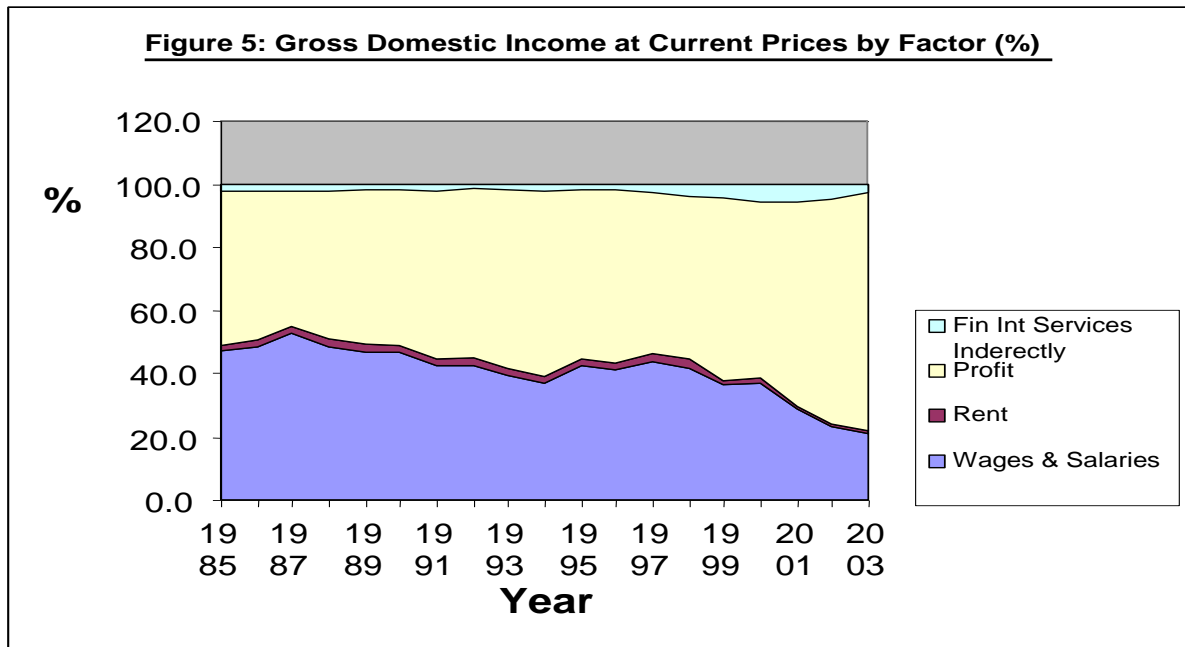
Figure 4: Real average earnings index, 1975-2004



Source: Calculated from CSO unpublished Data

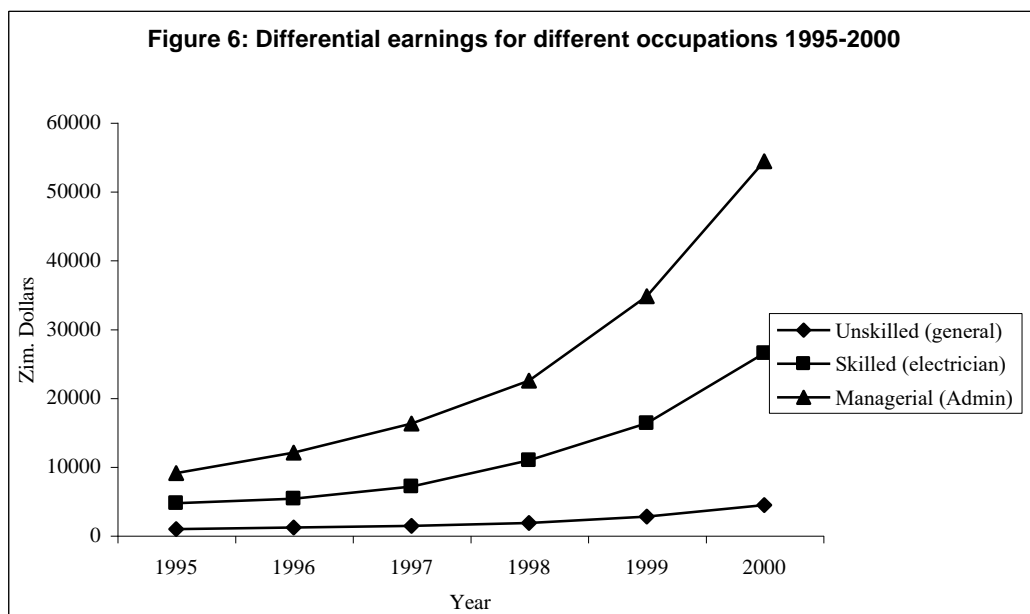
Moreover, the absence of an employment response during the period of the structural adjustment reforms is particularly worrying, especially considering the collapse in real wages. Orthodox theory requires that in the context of unemployment, real wages be flexible. As the World Bank commented with respect to the collapse in real wages in sub-Saharan Africa, such a trend represents, “... a brutal but necessary adjustment to reflect a labour force that has outstripped job creation and the need to become internationally competitive.”

As shown in Figure 5 below, from the period of the implementation of ESAP, the share of wages and salaries in the Gross Domestic Income declined from an average of 49% during the preceding period of 1985-90, to 41.5% before declining further to 38.4% during the crisis period of 1997-2002. Profits, on the other hand, increased from an average of 50% between 1985 and 1990, to 58.4% during 1991 to 1996, and 65% in the 1997-2002 period



Source: Derived from Unpublished CSO Data

Figure 6 below shows the widening of income differentials over time. It also reflects that the least paid workers are the ones who have borne the brunt of the current economic crisis. This violates the need for consistency in the earnings structure. Furthermore, observing the huge gap between the existing negotiated sectoral minimum wages and the required living wage, the Tripartite Negotiating Forum (TNF) set national minimum wages in September 2001, which were reviewed in April 2003. However, as a result of rising inflation, the real wages collapsed, such that the average minimum wage of Z\$110,000.00 (revalued) a month is only 11,7% of the PDL of Z\$937,800.00 as at February 2007.



Currently, inflation is still at three-digit levels. As at February 2007, the rate of inflation was 1729,9 per cent. This has eroded the value of the Zimbabwean Dollar, making it very difficult for ordinary workers to receive a meaningful wage. As most workers now say, their take-home

pay can no longer take them home. Table 3 below illustrates the impact of inflation on the purchasing power of the Zimbabwean Dollar.

Table 3: Real Value of the 1995 Zimbabwean Dollar in Cents

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Apr-05	May-05
CPI	100	121.4	144.3	190.1	301.3	469.6	807.5	1883.1	8757.1	39406.0	74698.7	84478.4
Real value	100	82.4	69.3	52.6	33.2	21.3	12.4	5.3	1.1	0.3	0.1	0.1

Source: Own calculations based on the Central Statistical Office CPI.

It is clear that the real value of the Zimbabwe Dollar in 1995 has been whittled down to 0.1 cents by May 2005. This implies that what 0.1 cents could buy in 1995 is what a dollar buys at May 2005 prices. The current average minimum wage in Zimbabwe's private sector is Z\$110,000.00 (revalued) per month, and yet, what is required to maintain the basic standard of living, measured by the PDL, amounts to Z\$937,800.00 (revalued) per month using the Central Statistics Office figures for February 2007. The average minimum wage is, therefore, only 11,9% of the relevant PDL. Unfortunately, this means that even those who are employed cannot sustain their livelihoods in a meaningful way and thus, most workers have been reduced to 'the working poor.'



"Grandpa, tell me about the good old days when you used to buy bread everyday..."

Furthermore, the Government's tax revenue takes more from the ordinary worker than it does from a company, despite the fact that an individual worker earns much less than the income that a company receives. Revenue contributions from individual income tax rose from 27.8% during 1995/96 to 44.4% in 2003 to 47.5% in 2006. The contribution of company tax however declined from 18.2% during 1994/95 to only 6.1% in 2003 and 30% in 2006. Such a tax system is evidently regressive as it penalises those who earn the least more than those at the higher levels of the earnings structure. Therefore, the campaign for a living wage that is reasonable, given the hyperinflationary environment and the current economic crisis is not only called for, but also important.

G **ONCLUSION**

In providing this status summary of the effect of corporate-driven globalisation and the current economic crisis on certain essential services and necessities of life, *LEDRIZ* and the *ZCTU* are providing information on the 8 socio-economic rights for people to not only know them, but to also exercise and demand them. In terms of development, it implies the need for a human-centred approach where these rights are viewed as priorities. Basic needs and human rights are indivisible and universal. Therefore, they cannot just be left to the whims of the market but should remain in the domain of the public sector. National budgets should, therefore, give pride of place in terms of resource allocation to the attainment of these basic needs and rights.